

NI BELL

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WAR

THE DEFINITIVE EDITION



NE OBLIVISCARIS : SPECTEMUR AGENDO

PROMOTIONAL COPY ONLY NOT FOR RESALE

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SPECTEMUR AGENDO

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For Nannan & Grandma

A copy of this book is available in the British Library
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British Field Memorial Service. Courtesy of The Great War Primary Document Archive.

"TO YOU ALL, TO WHOM WE
OWE SO MUCH, AND WHO ARE
SO SOON FORGOTTEN,
I DEDICATE WITH A FULL
HEART THESE PAGES WHICH
YOU HAVE LIVED..."

PIERRE CLOSTERMANN
DEDICATION, THE BIG SHOW, 1951



A Remembrance cross is pictured laying on a bed of poppies at a service in Helmand, Afghanistan. © CrownCopyright

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Terry Waite CBE and Harold with the wreath they had made on the island of Java.

FOREWORD

BY TERRY WAITE CBE

To see the thousands of poppies fall from the ceiling of the Royal Albert Hall is a wonderful and moving sight. It is also chilling when we remember that each poppy represents a life lost in conflict. Apart from the Service men and women who have lost their lives in warfare there are many millions of civilians, especially women and children, who have suffered the consequences of warfare. Alas, we never learn from history and, as I write, the killing continues in some part of the world or other.

We can be thankful that there are many people and organisations that spend their lives attempting to bring warfare to an end and also to offer care and support to the victims of warfare. The Royal British Legion has helped untold numbers during the past 90 years and I am sure that many will wish to join with me in wishing them all success in the work they are currently engaged in.

By buying a copy of this book and bringing it to the attention of your friends you will be playing your part in the relief of suffering. The book has been prepared at a time of recession only due to the hard and dedicated work of Ni Bell. At times it seemed as though it would never see the light of day but thanks to Ni and his determination it has. Now it is up to all of us to make it known and to play our part in working for peace on Earth and goodwill to all men.

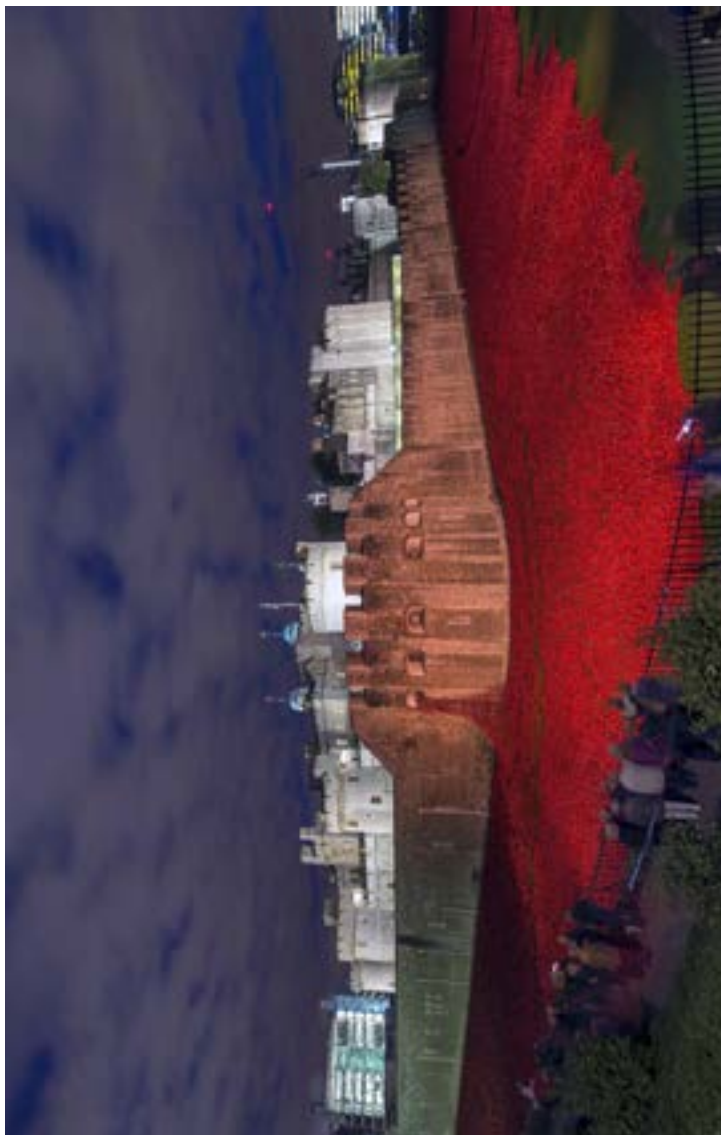


Soldiers Watching RAF Merlin Helicopter Underslung Load in Afghanistan.
© CrownCopyright

APRIL, 1997

When, I left for France towards the end of April, with Richard, Ann & Sharon to visit the grave of my great uncle. I had only read about the events of the D-Day landings and the bombardment of the northern city of Caen, where my great uncle Frank was killed, on the front line, July 8th 1944 – he was twenty-five.

Even fifty odd years after the allied invasion of Normandy and the northern stretch of coastline in 1944, which unquestionably resulted in great loss. An unmistakable and unforgettable presence abides the air, along the coast and for many kilometres inland still today. When I walked on the sand and across the hilltops overlooking the horizon to the landing beaches, one can only take a deep breath as one tries to comprehend the events that took place fifty-three years ago. There is a great sense that compunction as taken place there if not then, certainly in the years that have followed. Every single person that leaves there seems to gain a more powerful understanding of the divergent ideals that cost so many lives; the very least you depart knowing that what took place can never be allowed to manifest its self again. This is a very powerful place. People say there's no substitute for first-hand experience, thank God I wasn't there in 1944 and the months that followed. After you have been, there is no need for first-hand experience...



The Tower of London with the evolving art installation 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red' consists of 888,246 handmade ceramic poppies, each poppy representing a British fatality during World War I. The installation was created by ceramic artist Paul Cummins MBE and stage designer Tom Piper MBE. © CrownCopyright

AUTHORS INTRODUCTION

The work you have done so far in promoting peace and remembrance through education is noble, but still a vital one. Only by sharing your own personal stories and listening to the stories of others will we continue to make great changes together. Not only will we grow as individuals, but as nations, all working together embracing our many differences by working shoulder-to-shoulder. And by doing so we will make changes to our world that casts no man, woman, child or beast in the shadow of inequality, prejudice or repression.

These are the things which are attainable, not impossible. And they are attainable because we have the power to do it from within ourselves.

I strongly believe by speaking out and asking questions we can educate, inform and learn. It was brought to my attention only recently that the ebook version of footsteps, which was the last edition of the book produced in 2012, wasn't accessible to everyone - certainly by those who don't have access to e-readers or tablets and smartphones. When I made the commitment to produce the digital edition of footsteps, it was in order to make an updated book available to the new generation of people who read electronically. Alongside the original paperback produced in 2010, I wanted to make footsteps available to the widest audience possible, to be used as a reading aid and study guide.

So I am delighted, that the digital version of footsteps is

now available as this definitive edition paperback.

Thank you to all of you, who have read footsteps, I am so very proud of what you have achieved by playing your part in remembrance. And I am very optimistic of what you will achieve in the years to come.

Ni Bell, 2015



Bray Vale British Cemetery, France. Courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

SERVICE NOT SELF

Probably best known as the nation's custodian of remembrance, The Royal British Legion celebrates its 90th Anniversary this year. The British Legion was founded in 1921 as a voice for the ex-service community and as a merger of four organisations: the Comrades of The Great War, the National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilized Sailors and Soldiers and the Officers' Association.

Poppies were first suggested as a symbol of Remembrance in the USA by Miss Moina Michael in November 1918 and were adopted by the American Legion in 1920. In August 1921, Madame Guerin introduced her poppies, made by a French-American charity's widows, to the British Legion. The next suitable occasion for a poppy-linked appeal was Armistice Day and so the first Poppy Appeal was born.

The British Legion was granted a Royal Charter on 29th May 1971 to mark its fiftieth anniversary which gives the Legion the privilege of the prefix 'Royal'. Earl Haig, commander of the Battle of the Somme and Passchendaele was one of the founders of the Legion and remained President of The Royal British Legion until his death. The role of The Royal British Legion has developed and grown greatly since it was formed in 1921. So too have the needs of the ex-service persons. The Royal British Legion safeguards their welfare, interests and memory. The welfare work of The Royal British Legion

continues to expand and diversify as the welfare needs of the population evolve. The Royal British Legion spends over £1.2 million a week on welfare work and as a result, they are able to help around 100,000 people.

The Royal British Legion also runs the annual Poppy Appeal. From late October onwards volunteers appear up and down the streets not only in our country, but in countries all around the world. Everyone has the opportunity to make a donation and wear their poppy for remembrance. All the money raised from the Poppy Appeal, possibly the most recognised appeal in the UK today, goes straight into continuing the vital work The Royal British Legion does every year. The Royal British Legion is a vital charity in the UK providing for those that need it most.

In this their 90th anniversary year, The Royal British Legion aim to raise £90 million, £1 million for every year of their existence. By buying this book, wearing a poppy, donating directly to the charity or by taking part in one of the many projects up and down the country and beyond you are helping by playing your part in the relief of suffering through the work of The Royal British Legion.



Arras, France. Courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

**"WHERE ONE BURNS BOOKS,
ONE WILL, IN THE END, BURN
PEOPLE."**

HEINRICH HEINE
GERMAN JEWISH POET 1797 - 1856

In the Footsteps of War: Our Stories

Greater love hath no man than this,
Than a man who lays down his life
for that of his friends.

John 15: 13

HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

Prime Minister, Ambassador, Ladies and Gentleman,

None of us will ever forget where we were or what we were doing when, on that otherwise ordinary day and out of a clear blue sky came so much premeditated death and destruction – on a scale and in a way that shocked the entire world.

But at the heart of all those endless and rather impersonal news reports lay the shattered lives and hopes of all those who we join here today, both in London and New York; those whose loved ones were so cruelly, brutally and pointlessly torn from them. That was ten years ago, and for so many of those left behind it must be an eternity; a continuing, awful agony that has to be endured day by day.

To say that we understand; that we sympathize; that we hold you in our thoughts and prayers is true, but I know it is hopelessly, utterly inadequate.

I can at least understand something of what you have been through and of how the wounds never really heal – because back in 1979 my greatly loved Great Uncle, Lord Mountbatten, and one of my young godsons were torn from my own family – and others in their group also killed or horrifically injured – by a terrorist bomb while sailing peacefully in his boat off the coast of County Sligo in Ireland.

At the time, I remember feeling intense anger, even hatred, of those who could even contemplate doing such a thing. But,

then, I began to reflect that all the greatest wisdom that has come down to us over the ages speaks of the overriding need to break the law of cause and effect and, somehow, to find the strength to search for a more positive way of overcoming the evil in men's hearts.

Of course, this is far easier said than done, and yet I find there are many of us who are not only tired of the perpetual killing, maiming and senseless terrorism that blights the human family, but bewildered by it too – simply because our instinct tells us that seeking revenge never actually achieves peace in the end. It is, surely, only by avoiding vengefulness that we can rebuild what has been lost and save it from being lost again.

Indeed, I recall that President Abraham Lincoln once spoke very powerfully of having “wasted valuable hours imaging revenge or confusion.” He spoke of the practical importance of “a forgiving spirit” to dissipate anger and resentment.

I can't help feeling he was right. For is it not strange that, although that dreadful act of violence was meant to divide us, it has actually drawn us together – one person to another, one community to another. As it has today. On this anniversary, we are drawn to you, in our thoughts and in our prayers, knowing that we cannot change the past, but that through struggling to find a light that can lighten our darkness we may ultimately bring the healing the world so desperately needs...

HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

This speech was delivered by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, at the memorial ceremony at Grosvenor Square on the 10th anniversary of the September 11th attacks. The Prince of Wales has kindly given permission to reproduce that speech in full exclusively for this publication.

THE RT HON DAVID CAMERON MP, PRIME MINISTER

THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE & THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Firstly, allow me to pay tribute, not only to the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces today, but also to the veterans and the fallen. These are a unique group of people of whom Her Majesty The Queen and Her Majesty's Government are extremely proud. The Prime Minister is frequently humbled by the bravery, dedication and professionalism of our Service personnel, and he fully recognises and appreciates the sacrifices made by these men and women every day to serve and protect this country.

The Prime Minister's office has asked me to pass on his appreciation to Ni Bell for his support of our Service personnel. I hope that the new Definitive Edition of 'In The Footsteps of War' will be as well received as the original book produced in 2011.

DR JOHN SENTAMU

THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

Battles can take many forms. I remember the story in South Africa of a mother at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing about her son's murder.

The police officer who had ordered the brutal killing was there, shamefacedly listening to the details of what he and his colleagues had done. At the end the room was quiet.

The chair of the commission, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, asked the woman if she had anything to say to the man who had killed her son.

She responded: "I am very full of sorrow. So I am asking you now – come with me to the place where he died, pick up in your hands some of the dust of the place where his body lay, and feel in your soul what it is to have lost so much. And then I will ask you one thing more. When you have felt my sadness, I want you to do this. I have so much love, and without my son, that love has nowhere to go. So I am asking you – from now on, you be my son, and I will love you in his place." And the policeman did become as her son.

As a society, and indeed as a world, we are all bound together.

Total transformation means the changing of lives so that the maladies that cause division are eliminated – total transformation based on renewal.

To build a better world, we must learn to understand each other better.

Whenever we think that it may be impossible to forgive our greatest enemy, we should remember that mother in South Africa and the incredible attitude she took when brought face to face with her son's killer.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said: "Forgiveness is not forgetting, it's actually remembering. Remembering and not using your right to fight back."

DR JOHN SENTAMU

YAD VASHEM

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION: CREATING HOPE FROM HOPELESSNESS. MAINTAINING RELEVANCE, 70 YEARS AND BEYOND

"Throughout the ages, people have been tired and have worn their feet out on God's earth, in the cold and the heat, and that, too, is part of life. This sort of feeling has been growing much stronger in me: a hint of eternity steals through my smallest daily activities and perceptions. I am not alone in my tiredness or sickness or fears, but at one with millions of others from many centuries- and it is all part of life, and life is beautiful as well, as hopeless while full of hope."

Esther "Etty" Hillesum (1914 -1943)

Etty Hillesum was a Dutch Jewish woman murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz. Her letters and diaries, written between 1941-1943, described life in Amsterdam under the German occupation. Her letters also raise existential questions regarding mankind and the purpose of life. The timelessness of her questions enable educators 70 years later to contemplate fundamental, philosophical issues with their students such as how to create meaning in a seemingly meaningless world.

As a defining event which influenced all of civil society, the Holocaust was planned meticulously within the social and organizational frameworks of society, utilizing modern infrastructure and perpetrated by the most advanced nation in the world. Despite being a heavy and difficult topic,

teaching the Holocaust can present a significant and relevant educational opportunity for today's educators.

The relevance of teaching the Holocaust is addressed frequently in modern discourse - for students, for teachers and for the education systems in general. For some there is a difference between commemoration and education, and while it would appear logical to keep the memory alive as part of a personal, community, national or international heritage, the challenge remains: How is teaching the Holocaust relevant for our students today?

There are several approaches to addressing the term relevance in education. Some focus on didactics and methodology as key factors for creating interest and relevance. Another approach emphasizes the importance of the information being taught and the extent to which a historical event has contributed to an increased understanding of the present. A third approach, demonstrated in the educational philosophy of Yad Vashem, emphasizes the level of impact the issue has on the students' thoughts and beliefs as well as the questions that are raised with regard to ethics and basic perceptions.

Yad Vashem, established in Israel in 1953 as the Jewish people's memorial to the six million men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust, has become synonymous with Holocaust remembrance and education. The International School for Holocaust Studies (ISHS) of Yad Vashem, was established on the institute's Jerusalem campus in 1993, training hundreds of educators from all over the world on to how to teach the Holocaust in a sensitive and accessible manner. ISHS's pedagogic philosophy on teaching the Holocaust revolves around two key axes, historical and educational. The historical axis looks at key issues during this period of time such as the rise of Nazi ideology; the development of anti-Jewish policies both inside and outside of Germany; the response of the Jewish population to these policies; the establishment of ghettos and the "Final Solution". The educational axis concurrently deals with both the Jewish, human story and the universal significance of the Holocaust. Students are encouraged to raise questions about the lives of the Jewish victims before and during the Holocaust: Who

were these Jews that were murdered? What did their cultural world consist of? How did they deal with a world that became increasingly chaotic? How were they able to rebuild their lives afterwards?

The deep ethical questions that the Holocaust raises are endless and relate to social phenomena such as antisemitism, hatred, and racism; to historical processes such as the role of communities and countries, victims, survivors, activism vs bystanders and perpetrators and to profound philosophical debates such as how such an event was humanly possible.

Using this approach, educators are encouraged to see the victim as an individual rather than as a statistic, and to communicate that idea to students. Doing so evokes a sense of empathy with the victims, who become real people in the student's eyes, with identities and aspirations. The empathy created allows students and teachers to discuss the Holocaust in a more meaningful way as students can relate more easily to people whose stories they have learned, rather than to two-dimensional, black-and-white pictures or numbers in a list.

Holocaust education resonates within many disciplines such as Philosophy, Politics, History, Sociology, Psychology, Music and Arts. The discipline influences the method, which consequently effects the personal connection of the students and the level of empathy, which then reflects on the level of attention. Empathy is definitely a key factor in education, and with respect to Holocaust studies, it is clear that linear, historical facts and technical details - which are often too horrifying for the classroom - do not necessarily succeed in creating empathy.

The challenges of Holocaust Education and Commemoration in the 21st century are daunting. Some relate to the changing methods of inquiring information and the approaches of pedagogy; others relate to current world politics, conflicting agendas, and to some extent, antisemitism. However, teachers that allow themselves to open their hearts and attention to this subject matter will find it very relevant to their educational agenda. Through our thousands-strong graduate network in over 60 countries worldwide, we have seen first-hand examples of teachers from different backgrounds and disciplines, that hold different opinions

and serve different audiences, and yet all are committed not only to commemoration but also to the educational value that Holocaust studies have. This is the common ground of an Indian teacher who wrote a play about the Holocaust in Hindi for his high school to perform, a teacher in Turkey who taught his students about Jewish life before the war and the history of antisemitism, and a group of Berlin high school students who chose to rename their school in memory of Refik Veseli, a Muslim Righteous Among The Nations – after an extensive educational learning process culminating in a trip to Yad Vashem. It can be seen that Holocaust Education remains more relevant than ever for today's world, where we are constantly forced to grapple with difficult challenges, finding the hope in seemingly hopeless situations, just as Etty Hillesum posited in her writings.

We face the dawn of an age of a world without those who experienced the horrors of the Holocaust first-hand to tell their stories, and counter those who would deny what happened. For those of us responsible for shaping Holocaust Education for future generations, the question becomes not why we should teach it but rather how to teach in a way that engages today's classrooms, in a manner that dignifies the stories of those who perished - remembering the past and shaping the future.

DR EYAL KAMINKA

Dr Eyal Kaminka serves as the Director of Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies and Lily Safra Chair of Holocaust Education. A novelist and the author of several professional books, Kaminka specialises in Breakthrough Thinking, management and education. A former musician, Kaminka resides in Israel with his wife and four children.

ANGELO MARCOS

ACTOR & STAND UP COMEDIAN

When I was a teenager I got my first part-time job working in a supermarket. The staff were' a real mix of people, various ages and from all different walks of life. This is where I met William. I never did find out how old he was when I knew him, but the only way to describe him was as a distinguished older gentleman. He had a full head of white hair which was always immaculately sculpted, and he carried himself with a dignity and poise that seemed slightly out of place for a retail outlet.

He was always a very friendly person, but was known to be quite intense at times, especially when speaking to the younger members of staff – including me. I remember speaking to him only a few times, but each time he would remind me that I should be enjoying my life and that I should appreciate being young and free. He took every opportunity to drum into me and the other young employees that we should be thankful for the opportunities in front of us, and that we were fortunate to be living “in this day and age”. That seemed to be his favourite phrase - “in this day and age”.

One of the strongest memories I have of William, the one my mind keeps going back to and won't let me forget, was a time when we were talking in the staff restaurant. He began to explain how most of the world doesn't have the opportunities we have in this country, and that we should be grateful for the people that fought for us to be this way. He suddenly stopped

talking and looked away, and that was when I realised he was fighting the urge to cry.

I always thought he must have had to fight in the war when he was younger, or that maybe he had lost a friend who had been a soldier. It wasn't until William passed away that I was told by somebody else about his early life. During the Second World War William was evacuated not once but twice, and both times he had found himself living with complete strangers in the middle of towns he had never heard of. The people were friendly and their houses were nice, but they weren't his parents and he wasn't in his own home. I can only imagine how difficult that must have been for him.

A short while after he was evacuated for the second time, he was given devastating news. He was told not only that his father – a soldier – had been killed, but that his mother had also died within a matter of days. She had been driving a fire engine either to or from the site of one bombing and was caught in a new wave of bombings.

I was shocked to hear this story, and I would love to be able to go back and tell William that I still think about the things he said. Knowing now what he went through in his life, I understand why he told us to always be grateful for the opportunities we have, and the society we live in. His parents after all gave their lives for it.

The really sad thing is, not only is he not alone in having a tragic story like this, but there are literally millions of others around the world whose lives have been ruined or taken away through war. Not to mention the ones who have yet to be affected by the wars going on around the world at this time.

It shouldn't have happened, and it shouldn't be happening.

Not in this day and age.

ANGELO MARCOS

MUSICIAN AND BUSINESSMAN SOLANO PEÑA LENZI

THE ENEMY

I must say, my memories of the past, especially my childhood are not detailed. They are but a number of very visual events, combined with emotional memories in no clear sequence and without specific dates attached. Recalling my memories is like putting together these events and emotions like a kid joining the dots to draw the shape of a horse.

I am 9 years old, one of 30 boys in my fourth grade, at Cardinal Newman School. One of the sequences I recall is the bombing emergency drill; the bell ringing, the teacher getting us in line to take us out of the classroom. Walking out of the class to join the rest of the school at the sports camp, to finally dive in orderly fashion into the only underground construction there was in the whole 60 thousand square metres of school ground: the sports changing rooms. Looking back, there is no doubt that those rooms would have easily collapsed with a single bomb dropping in their proximity. And one of my emotional memories of these times is the hatred of an enemy, one which could imminently put our lives at risk during this incomprehensible part of my life: war.

The reader could Google Cardinal Newman School and the immediate thought might be: this is Brighton, in the middle of the Second World War. Nothing could be further

from the real place of events: this is Buenos Aires, Argentina in the middle of the Malvinas War of 1982, 11,000 kilometres away from Brighton and it's enemy, and 1,900 kilometres away from the islands in dispute: The Malvinas.

There was no doubt in my mind (and there still isn't) that the islands are in Argentine maritime territory therefore, they are Argentine. Fighting a war in order to recover them from its occupiers is a different story. Many things have changed in my way of seeing it since 1982, through the eyes of a nine year old boy. The bottom line is there will never be a single valid explanation for this war. So I will only focus on how I experienced this war then and how it affected me personally - almost twenty years later - when I came to live in the United Kingdom, where I currently reside.

We were fighting for justice; to recover what had been taken from us decades ago, by a global empire thirsty for more, that was now holding on to the islands despite having withdrawn from most colonies and occupied territories. Our soldiers were dying for a Nation, and we hated the British for killing them and for fighting for an unjust cause. Every magazine, newspaper, TV show and adult I came across would only feed this feeling of injustice and hatred with more and more facts and theories about the rightness and wrongness of it all. As a nine year old, I hated the British and celebrated every ship our air force hit, and was inundated in more pain and hatred when our cruiser General Belgrano was sunk outside the 200 mile total exclusion zone.

Since settling in London in September 2001, I have come across the issue many times and I must say, in the majority of them, with a mutual respect between the British counterpart and myself. The issue would be treated as an unnecessary war sparked mostly for political reasons of both British and Argentine governments of the time. Initially I didn't like the 'non-confrontation approach' to it, until I realized there is no other way. In any discussion, there are always two sides of the story, and many arguments to back either sides of it. But with war, a lot of deep feelings come in place, and the argument cannot be kept philosophical. It turns emotional very quickly, and suddenly it's not a discussion anymore, it is war again.

During the almost eight years of living away from home,

I have changed a lot. I'm not the person I would be, had I remained in Argentina all these years. I have adapted to a very different culture and taken on many good things of this culture and I guess some of the bad ones as well. I have also grown my young family here with two boys born in London and a third one on its way. And on professional grounds, I have built up my own wine company Hispamerchants from scratch. Why tell you all this you might ask? Because the same way I am trying my best to leave my sons a running business when I retire, when I think of the Malvinas War, I think of how I would like to tell the story to my kids. I have purposely named the war the Malvinas war, instead of the Falklands War. That's because I experienced the war in Argentina and that's how we call the islands. Now, my kids were born in the UK and, unless we all go back home at some point, they will live their childhood here. Would I want them to go against everything else in their environment by showing them my view? Should I do this, or should I just tell them the facts, both sides of the story and let them make their own decision, even if it means them being on the 'other side'? I will have to make a call, very soon.

At the end of the day what matters most of all is to remember, and this is one of the good things I've learned from British culture that I can be proud of today. To remember what happened, remember the dead and pass it on from one generation to the other. No matter from what angle the story is told, it needs to stay alive. Mainly for those who fought and suffered each war, but also as a reminder of how awful a war is. And as important as patriotism is, it must be contained to all extent, before stepping into the worst possible result: war.

SOLANO PEÑA LENZI, LONDON

TERRY WAITE CBE

RETURN TO THE PAST. A TRUE STORY FOR
POPPY DAY

I first met Harold some 15 years ago when we bought a house in the Suffolk countryside. He was retired and living with his wife and to supplement his income he did a small job at a nearby local factory. Knowing of my concern for former prisoners of war he invited me to be a Patron of the local FEPOW group. Year by year we met for an annual get-together and year by year the numbers decreased as members passed away.

Harold, like so many ex-prisoners of the Japanese, rarely spoke about his past. When he returned home from the camps he was told not to talk about the experience and get on with life. One day he came to see me.

"I've been thinking," he said. "Life is going by and I'm not getting any younger. I'd really like to be able to return to the place where I was captured all those years ago."

Harold had not had an easy childhood. He was not exactly truthful about his age and managed to get into the Royal Navy when he was 14 years old. He went to HMS Ganges, the boys training establishment on the Suffolk Coast.

He passed through the training and was posted to his first ship, which, unknown to him at the time, was to be his last. It was off the coast of Java that the ship was torpedoed. On the command 'Abandon Ship!' Harold jumped over the side and being young and fit managed to swim the dozen or so miles

to the nearest island.

There, Japanese soldiers were waiting for him and the young companion whom he had met in the water. The soldiers gave them both a spade and told them to start digging their graves. As they were digging Harold heard a voice behind him speaking in perfect English.

"You're in a fine mess," it said.

He turned round and there was a Japanese Officer. It turned out that the officer had lived for years in the United States of America, returned to his home country and had been conscripted into the Japanese Army.

"You won't die," said the officer, "but I shall have to send you to a camp."

And so Harold spent the remainder of the war in different camps in Java. He hardly speaks about some of the horrors he endured and that is typical of so many former prisoners.

"Now I feel like I would like to return," he said, "but I've never flown in my life, my wife does not want to come with me as the journey would be too much and it would be terribly expensive."

"Don't worry Harold," I said, "I'll come with you and together we'll see what we can find."

My hard-working secretary contacted the Admiralty and established the exact location where the ship went down. Enough money was raised thanks to the (Royal British) Legion and other supporters and one day Harold and I set off from a London Airport to fly to Indonesia with a stop in Singapore. Virgin Airlines kindly gave us an upgrade to First Class and we travelled in style.

When we arrived at the Island we had a wreath made and hired a small boat. As luck would have it the owner of the boat knew where the ship went down and as it was in shallow water at low tide the mast was still visible above the sea. One morning we set sail and approached the location. Harold placed the wreath over the side and we returned to the shore. It was a moving moment.

We remained silent in that little boat as the wreath bobbed up and down in the choppy sea. We both knew the stupidity of war and the horrors that it brings to so many. We uttered a silent prayer for peace and also prayed that those at home

would not forget the cost of the freedom we enjoy today.

Later we found the location of the camp where he was interred. There was now a supermarket on the site.

"That was the greatest thing that has happened to me in my life," said Harold when we returned home, "but only now was I ready to go back."

This Poppy Day, do not forget those who gave so much. Sometimes the wounds take a very long time to heal.

TERRY WAITE CBE

GUIA OLIVAR

It has been many years since the memories I recall now actually happened, the pictures in my mind are discoloured, but the feelings and emotions attached to them remain untouched and will under no circumstances change. I was born in Solano, on the island of Luzon, in the Philippines, in my grandma Flora's house on the 10th December 1945; I was the sixth of eleven children. My world had just begun and little did I know just how much it was changing around me.

When I came into the world they were killing people already, men, children and raping women; they would toss infants no older than I at that time, a few months old, into the air and with their bayonets raised catch the babies on the steely points of their weapons of war. They arrested all the men they didn't kill and held them as prisoners. They captured and tortured the educate men like lawyers and judges because they thought they were spies. My father was in his early thirties when he was captured by them. He had passed his bar exam in 1942, he was a lawyer and in the wrong place at the wrong time.

When the Japanese held him they mistreated him badly, depriving him of food. They used water torture on him; first depriving him of drinking water, then they made him drink litres of water until he couldn't physically drink anymore. At this point his captors would ask him to lie on his back while they kicked and stamped on his stomach, water would come through his ears while he wriggled in pain.

When my father was in prison with his friends, my mother

would go to the prison and take food for my father. Unknown to my mother at the time my father never received the food. On one occasion when my mother went to visit my father to her surprise the guards offered to make a deal for my father's freedom. Supplies were running low all over the Philippines including for the Japanese.

The guards that were holding my father told my mother to bring wine, chicken and eggs and in return they would release my father. Extra food was almost impossible to find anywhere but somehow my mother managed to find a friend that owned chickens and pleaded for him to help her. My mother returned to the prison as the guards requested her to do so - they took the food and released my father at midnight under the cover of darkness.

My father wandered along roadsides to his martial home but when he got there he found it occupied by the Japanese. Fearing he might be recaptured he hid in the darkness and made his way to his mother's house, home of my grandma flora. When he got to my grandma's house he was nothing more than skin and bones and suffering with exhaustion.

My father survived the war and continued practicing law until his death in 1956; he was only forty-nine years old. He defended his client's right up until his death, always holding up the right for the truth to be heard. Many times my father didn't take money for representing his clients because they were too poor. In return they would bring him vegetables grown in their gardens, their way of thanking him. He passed from cancer and declining health that started back in his hometown as a prisoner of war.

My grandma told me my father's story recalling many events and details, of the sound of bombings and the cruelty of the Japanese soldiers.

In 1945 my world changed around me, in one of the most influential events in history. I had the story passed down to me so I could know my past and understand the truth. My hatred and anger towards the cruel men that tortured my father with water torture even though it happened years ago, I still feel inside now. But I hold no resentment to the Japanese people today. They are not connected to the evil that manifested in World War Two.

I have children of my own now and I have lived in England with my family for twenty-three years. I want my grandchildren to know the truth about what happened to their great grandfather and the effect war had on our community. I want them to understand the importance of remembrance and the things that happened in 1945 must never happen again. Most importantly we must learn from our past.

GUIA OLIVAR, LONDON

VICTORIA BROOK

My family is just like many other families. Except to me of course they are special and unique. A twist of fate one after other deciding the random structure of how my family would get through the Second World War share a common thread amongst many. But at the same time are as individual as a fingerprint.

There are many stories that my family have lived. My story is about my auntie. My auntie was born during the war in 1943. My nan had a terrible birth with her and was very ill.

My grandad was told that due to the war being on, demands were high and the hospital couldn't look after both of them. He had to choose who got to stay in the hospital. Faced with the impossible decision he chose his wife, my nan. Their new baby who would become my auntie was given to my nan's sister to look after. Who took her and put her in an open drawer with a blanket as no one had any money for a cot or anything non-essential in the house. They fed her on powdered milk. They all expected the baby to die. But my auntie didn't.

Thousands of miles from the front line, my auntie was fighting her way through the war and the risks it had just place upon her. After four days, long nights and powdered milk my family began to think, "Hang on, this baby is still going strong, maybe she won't die."

My auntie made it through the war on her own terms and the impossible conditions it brought upon my family as it did for many others.

It is just a special story that I can't believe could happen in such recent years. With all that was going on around my auntie, with the world at war - she laid there in her little drawer wrapped up not only amongst tiny blankets but everything the country was fighting for and with – Hope.

This year, choose to remember the Poppy Appeal by sharing your memories and through conversation may we choose not to forget.

VICTORIA BROOK

SANDY & MARIANNE TURNBULL

WAR

I'm lucky my only immediate family member to serve in any war was my grandad, who served for five years in the Royal Air Force in World War Two. Although he died when I was still young I always remember the picture of him in his uniform, which was on the mantle in his home. He died on Remembrance Sunday 1989 and he always wore his poppy proudly. His RAF wings are passed down through generations of our family. This makes Remembrance Sunday also extra special for that reason.

My sister Marianne is district commissioner for Girl Guiding UK in the Penistone area and has to organize the Brownies part in one of the biggest Remembrance Sunday parades in this area every year. During the parade and church service the children learn about the importance of remembering the day and they feel that the parade march represents the soldiers marching, pays respects to the soldiers who lost their lives as well as the service men that still fight for freedom. The children also understand what the poppy represents and like learning the history thus making them proud to take part in the event.

Remembrance Sunday, remembering the war,
remembering the people who fought for you all,

Poppies on our chests, poppies in a wreath, marching

soldiers saluting the chief.

Celebrate the day, we remember our men, the poppies
that's how we remember them.

Poppies in the field when the war was done, symbolizes
the freedom that we all won.

DEDICATED TO WILLIAM TURNBULL 1909-
1989

BRIAN JAMES D'ARCY RVM

Shortly after my fifth birthday I saw my first and only fatality of the Second World War. We would take the bus to school, with the bigger boys looking after us younger ones, we had to carry gas masks being wartime. After the first week of coming home on the bus the route was becoming a steady routine. One day it failed to stop at the barrack gates so one of the boys who lived on the same street gave me his gas mask and jumped off. All the young children around me started to shout and I clearly remember the conductor rushing downstairs from the top deck and he rang the bell. The bus stopped and the older boys and conductor ran back towards the boy. Police cars and Ambulances arrived and we were taken home.

The next day we were told he had gone to heaven to live with God.

In 1940 my father was sent to Egypt and we moved to Liverpool to live with relatives.

At nighttime we would see the dock area of Liverpool illuminated by searchlights, lighting up the sky with flames bringing the night sky alive. Life was hard for the people of Liverpool, what with trying to avoid the bombings, bathing in front of the fire in a galvanised tub and toilets at the bottom of the yard, which were cold in winter. I also moved school twice, both of them turned into rubble which gave us the opportunity to skip school and go to the fair ground. We had such a good time that we forgot about the truant inspectors and we were caught and taken to school and caned. We were

sent home with a letter for Mum and received another smack; life was hard for little lads. I remember my mother telling my brother and me that we were moving to live with my father's brother, who was a bus driver and had a great sense of humour. With all the bombing he had difficulty collecting some lino that he had ordered so he went off route with bus and passengers, collected it and brought it home. This is where wartime humour came to the fore; he even offered his passengers a cup of tea. He lost his job as one of the passengers reported him.

In 1953 I followed in my father's footsteps and after completing my training at Dale Barracks, Chester, I was part of the Cheshire Regiment; I was sent to Egypt. By now my father was retired and invalid; he'd caught TB in Palestine and lost half of his lung. 1957 saw me posted to Malaya into Jungle warfare fighting against the local communist terrorists. The situation became known as the Malayan Emergency and didn't end until 1963. My only contact with the terrorists was collecting their dead bodies. Two Parliamentary Ministers had paid a visit to Malaya and did not like the idea of removing hands from shot terrorists for identification. Orders were received from Regimental Headquarters that all terrorists' bodies were to be brought out of the jungle for their I.D.

I retired from the Army in 1975 and became a Yeoman Warder at The Tower of London in 1976.

My Brother and I were the lucky ones for when the war ended in 1945 our father returned. He returned to UK and was medically discharged from the Army. So what do I feel about remembrance? The question is quite simple; we must never forget what happened to those unfortunate souls who did not return from the battlefields and the many who did return under medical conditions only to pass to the good lord above shortly afterwards.

When I march down the Mall on Remembrance Sunday with the Cheshire Regiment Association it is with straightened shoulders and head held high with sadness but also proud of those unfortunate souls not with us today.

World War Two as now passed and times have not changed, with service men and women still suffering; including the civilian population wherever the conflict is taking place.

I will therefore continue to do my duty and march proudly down the Mall remembering those who fought for this Country; never forgetting those who couldn't make a life like I could, a life I now enjoy with my family.

Please choose not to forget.

BRIAN D'ARCY R.V.M

DAVID LANG

BULLET IN THE BUM!

Although I served in the Royal Air Force in the 1950s my connection with the RAF, goes back to the dark days of the Second World War, during the summer of 1942 when I was just seven years old. Evacuated from London to Reading in Berkshire, I organized my first Garden Fete there to raise money for the British Prisoners of War Books and Games Fund and Forget-Me-Not League, founded by Miss Christine Knowles OBE. For my 1942 Fete I produced a simple handwritten programme which included such items as:

For one penny "GUESS number of beans in bottle" and or a halfpenny "See my TOOTH".

The Fete was a great success and soon afterwards I received a letter from the Fund dated 9th September 1942 which read:

Dear David

Thank you so very much for the money you have sent for our Prisoners of War. I think it is simply splendid of you to work so hard to get money for them.

I am going to send a special parcel to an airman in your name. It is going to Sergeant-Pilot Featherstone and there will be a card inside the parcel that says it comes from David Lang.

I am going to send you today a certificate from our Daisy Chain League to show how very hard you have worked for all our Prisoners of War.

With love from

Christine Knowles

A few years ago I tried to trace Sergeant-Pilot Mike Featherstone but unfortunately he had died a few months previously. However I found out he had been the second pilot flying a Royal Air Force 102 Squadron Whitley bomber, Serial No T 4297, based at RAF Topcliffe in Yorkshire. They were shot down on the night of 27th/28th June 1941 near Hipstedt, north of their target Bremen, in Germany but luckily all the crew escaped by parachute from their aircraft and were taken prisoner. My research into T4297 was helped by Squadron Leader Chris Goss, a serving RAF officer and aviation author who wrote the book about 102 Squadron entitled 'It's Suicide But It's Fun', published by Crecy Books in 1995. In it there is an account of this raid by Sergeant Brian Booth, the Air Gunner, in which he says poor old Mike Featherstone, got a bullet in the bum! Maybe that was why he was chosen to receive my parcel in 1942.

It is important that we remember the past because without the past there would be no future, but are we who survived the Second World War to be the last generation to care for the past and draw inspiration from it for the future? Indeed not, because by telling our stories we can motivate and educate the younger generations to follow in our footsteps so they too can be inspired by brave people like the crew of Whitley T4297 and all the other crews who flew with 102 Squadron so that we may live in freedom today.

DAVID LANG

SERGIO CICALÒ

MY FATHER'S MEMORIES FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In 1943 my father was 7 years old. Sardinia, like the rest of Italy, was in the middle of the war conflict; luckily, Sassari was never at the centre of major bombings: its particular geographical position, 10 kilometres from the sea, but not a seaport, allowed for a certain 'safety', except perhaps when the air planes of the enemies of the regime were flying over the town on their way to the nearest port target, Porto Torres.

This is one of my father's most enduring memories, the roaring air planes flying over their heads, dropping bombs at the first available occasion, unaware when or where.

As a young boy, you don't understand what is happening, why it's happening. You have a general idea of some 'political' diatribe that somehow involves your country. In our case, what my father couldn't understand was why some Italians were fighting with the wrong people, and there were other Italians who were fighting against them. If they were fighting against each other, why were there Americans, English and other foreigners involved?

That was as much as a 7-year-old boy would ask himself, without really getting an answer.

He knew, however, that it wasn't something to joke about, and that there were some very serious things to do in order to keep living as ordinary a life as possible.

My father was born in Fonni, a small village in the province

of Nuoro, in the high mountains of central Sardinia. His parents owned livestock in the Nurra, a region nearby Sassari, the capital city of the Northern Province. Travelling between centre and North Sardinia was almost a daily necessity.

Piazza Stazione, in the heart of Sassari's town centre, was the main location for the local transportation, and not only for passengers travelling to and from other towns, but also for those transporting goods of primary need - bread, water, cheese, to the villages nearby. It wasn't easy to buy stock and trade as normal during the war, let alone in the small villages in the middle of the countryside.

This is what helped my father retain those memories of many years ago: there were men, women, boys and children of his age that were less fortunate than he was, and couldn't rely on livestock or even the shop next door to have a simple breakfast. So he helped his father not only to look after cows and sheep, but to help give food to those who needed their weekly ration, so that they didn't have to travel every day. Train ticket fares were fairly expensive, and there was always a chance they may stop operating at any time.

My father didn't go to school like the rest of the children, but he was lucky enough to have a private teacher who prepared him for the exams in the local village where they traded. He doesn't remember how he got such privilege, but I suppose the teacher was rewarded with whatever fees my grandfather could afford as well as those primary goods they dealt with every day. She was particularly fond of ricotta cheese...

It was obligatory to pay an import duty for anything that went in and out of town.

Fonni became the centre of an unsuspecting trading business; because it sheltered the only 'military' hospital in that part of Sardinia where soldiers could be treated, so it was an occasion for bringing treatment as well as food, hence help those who couldn't afford the taxes on top of the costs of food. Cheating in Sassari was more difficult because as the capital of the north province there were more thorough checks. On one occasion, for instance, my father remembers a boy being thrown onto the wall and searched throughout until he fell unconscious on the floor, probably for sheer terror.

1943 was a bad harvest year; the weather was terrible, it rained often, perhaps too often in a region where the average raining season spans for only two months. This obviously affected the livestock, many animals died; the produce was not as prosperous as farmers would have wished. So when the deafening sound of the sirens alerted the population of an impending danger, and my grandfather, my father and all his friends had to interrupt trading and hide in an underground tunnel that run underneath the station square, they knew this was the other inexcusable reason why they risked losing a day's worth of food in order to protect their lives. Nature was being cruel enough, so why did man have to interfere too?

These are my father's few memories of a time he cannot remember in full because of his young age, but also a time he can neither forget too easily because he couldn't explain to himself what was happening, and why.

Remembrance is something he'd learnt the hard way, and its values of life transmitted onto us will always be at the core of our modern perception of life.

When I was a little boy, if there wasn't any ice cream I knew I could wait until another time. Every time we complain about somebody's rudeness, I am thankful I am not like them. When I complain of the expensiveness of a holiday, I am reminded of those who never knew a holiday, but had to hope they would live another day to see their families. When we go about our every day routine, I am thankful that I have something to do every day.

All I have to do is remember.

SERGIO CICALÒ, LONDON

DEDICATED TO THE LOVING MEMORY OF
PIETRINO CICALÒ 1935-2015



Taken after an improvised explosive device (IED) goes off in Afghanistan. Both soldiers survived their injuries.

“FOR EVIL TO TRIUMPH IT IS
ONLY NECESSARY FOR GOOD
MEN TO DO NOTHING”

EDMUND BURKE 1729 - 1797



Edith Ledger

Taken in her uniform at RAF Marham c. 1940. My Nannan received the Royal Oak leaf for her work during the war; one of only six women to do so. Many of the documents relating to her work are still classified.



George Ernest Knowles

My Grandad Knowles; this photo was taken by chance. A press photographer took the photo as my Grandad was boarding the ship that would take him and many others to war. My Grandad asked the photographer to make sure the photo reached his family c. 1941.



Nellie Ashurst

It was with my Grandma Bell that my education on war and remembrance truly began.



Grandma and Grandad Bell
January 1st 1940. My Grandad Tom escaped from a prisoner of war camp, only to return to France to help during Dunkirk.



Tomas Gayagoy
Surviving the war, he continued practicing law, often representing his clients for free. He fought for the truth and rights of people right until his death in 1956. He was 49.



Rosita and Tomas Gayagoy
When the Japanese invaded the Philippine islands in 1942 thousands of Filipino families were torn apart; just like in many other corners of the globe, war as a common bond with us all.



Brian D'Arcy RVM.



Brian D'Arcy enjoying a rare moment to relax with his pals in Borneo. The rare break was, however, short lived (see below).

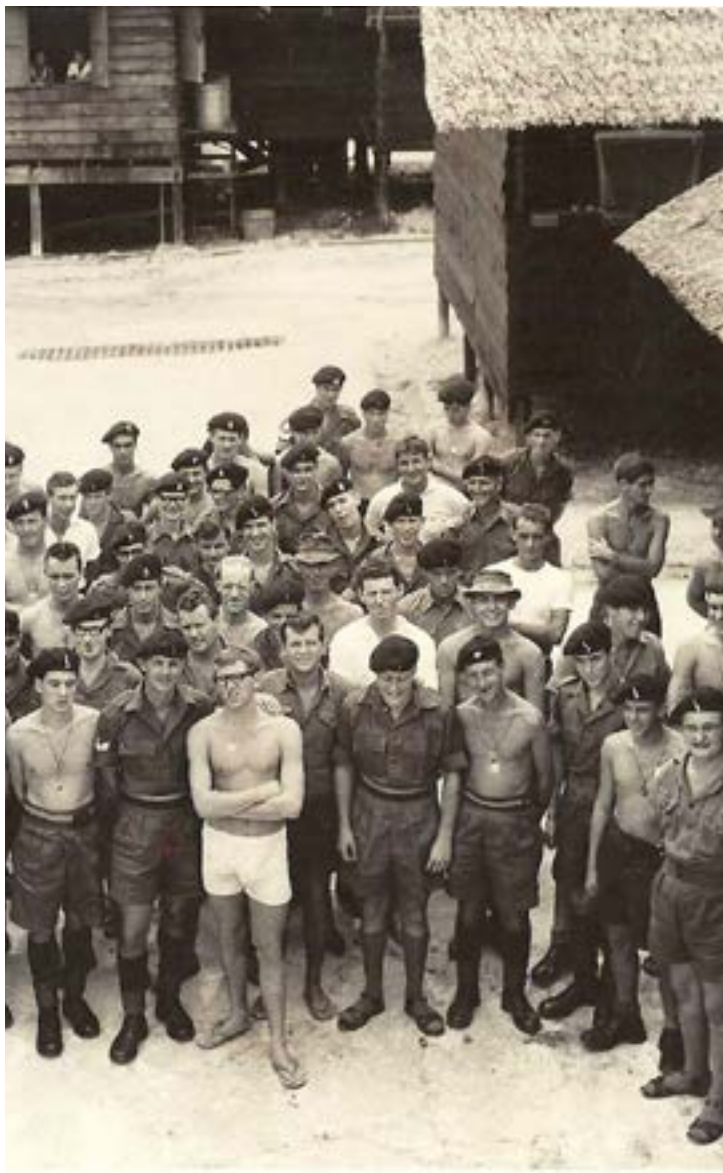


WAITING DELIVERY SHAN
CAL BRIAN D'ARCY AND PLATOON MEMBERS



Top: Brian D'Arcy and his platoon pause for this photo while waiting to be recovered in the Malayan Jungle.

Bottom: The cavalry arrive.



David Knowles and the others of 209 Signal Squadron 19th Infantry Brigade taken 23rd September 1965 at Sibu camp, Sarawak, Borneo.



It was only after many decades, that Harold was able to return to Java where he was held as a prisoner of war.



Sometimes the wounds take a very long time to heal.

MRS A BRICKSTOCK

KIDDERMINSTER

He was born and bred in Stourbridge just before the First World War, in an age which seems quite remote from us today. It was a harsh world in so many ways and there is no doubt that Claude had to work hard to make his way in the world. After school he went into a typical Black Country works making spades and shovels. Eventually, he decided to broaden his horizons and in 1937 enlisted for a career as a soldier.

It was still peacetime and he became a trooper in the cavalry - 47th Dragoon Guards, a famous cavalry regiment. They still had their horses in those days and so he became an expert in looking after these fine animals. The regiment became mechanised in 1938 and so Claude graduated to becoming a tank driver and mechanic. In 1939 when war came his unit was sent to France in the 2nd Division almost immediately. They advanced into Belgium and stayed there for the winter of early 1940 - a very harsh winter. You know what happened next - in May 1940 the German forces attacked France and within days the British Expeditionary force was driven back. Claude's unit was right in the front line and he stayed there protecting retreat to Dunkirk before being taken off and back to England. His Dunkirk Medal was a proud possession - and no wonder. It is a symbol of the bravery he showed. It must not be forgotten that this was a fighting retreat and that men like Claude saved the British army from what seemed inevitable - the surrender of over a quarter million men and

consequently the probable defeat of Britain by the Nazis.

He went back to France on D-DAY. The special waterproofed tanks or the 47th were the first to land - and this was the start of a continuous 11 months campaign which led to victory. As a tank driver he was often in the vanguard and more than once General Sir Brian Horrocks, the famous commander, jumped on his tank to encourage the troops and to see what was going on. Claude emerged from the war without serious injury, but even in the height of battle on the Albert Canal bridge approaching Arnhem he had time to save life - he drove his tank through the long grass towards an injured soldier, hauled him up and took him back to the Casualty Clearing station. By chance this man came from Lye. He returned home and when talking about his rescue Claude's friends and family worked out that this man's saviour was Claude himself. Meanwhile the 47th had entered Germany and Claude had seen the Belsen concentration camp and all its horrors.

After the war Claude was not demobbed until 1946. He received his demob suit with a trilby hat, a gratuity of £85 and little else. His demob certificate stated he is not afraid of hard work or difficulties, how perceptive this comment was. His skills of a tank driver and horseman were not needed in post-war Britain. But in 1941 when there was plenty of leave Claude and Doreen had been married at St Thomas's church Stourbridge. With two daughters he had to start again. He tried chain making briefly, but it was not really to his liking. So he used his gratuity to set up with Doreen, a shop in Lye which developed into an antiques business. This went on until 1976 when they moved. It was a brave decision which involved a lot of hard work, many long hours and, I expect, a few difficulties, But Claude was able to work with anyone and had a good sense of humour. It paid off and the contacts he and Doreen made were solid and lasting. They built a respectable antique business which lasted for some 40 years.

This short story is of my farther, Claude Sankey, who sadly died august 2003. Not a day goes by when I don't think of my father and what he and so many others did for us. Please help remember those we are not meant to forget.

MRS A BRICKSTOCK, KIDDERMINSTER

LINDSAY BUCHANAN

DASHED DREAMS - VE DAY

My story begins in Steyning, a small market town snuggling in the South Downs of Sussex. In 1943 The North Nova Scotia Highlanders were billeted locally. These friendly Canadians soon won the friendship and, in some cases, the hearts of the local Steyning people.

In the August of 1943 Steyning was holding a 'Holidays at Home' event which also included a Garden Fete (the war wasn't going to stop Steyning from enjoying itself). The Pipe Band of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders was invited to join in and marched up Steyning High Street with kilts swirling, pipes playing, drums beating, drumsticks twirling. A young woman Gwen Wood, daughter of local butcher, was watching from their drawing room window and her attention was immediately drawn to a tall, handsome, blonde haired drummer.

Later, in the Market Field, the Fete was in full swing where Gwen and her friend Sally were running the Hoopla Stall, when along came two good looking Canadians and asked if they were Gwen and Sally as they had been told these two ladies were the best dancers in Steyning! Sure enough one of the men was the tall blonde Gwen had seen in the Parade! Ken Buchanan! Ken and Pipe Major Ross Stone had just been judging the Best Legs competition!

Gwen's Brother-in-law, Lewis entertained the Band for tea in his back garden. Gwen and Ken ended up washing up

together! Over the next several months Ken and Gwen met whenever he was given leave.

Ken realized that his unit was training for something big, the training was arduous and at times dangerous, it was the build up towards D-Day.

The North Nova Scotia Highlanders (part of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division) landed on Juno beach Normandy on D Day June 6th 1944.

Ken and Gwen were married on 4th May 1944 and spent as much time as they could together. During their times apart they would telephone each other and write letters practically every day, sometimes more than one a day. I was born on 14th February 1945. My father was fighting somewhere in Western Europe. He came home on leave for my Christening when I was 6 weeks old then returned to his unit in Europe. He and my Mother had great plans for after the war – going to Canada, starting up a new home etc. It was all very exciting.

In May the end of the war in Europe was declared. Everyone was ecstatic. My father was hoping to celebrate the victory with his brother Jack, just a short journey away from where he was billeted. The men were busy cleaning their weapons and preparing for the celebrations when suddenly a gunshot rang out... my father's best friend had accidentally shot him. Pte Ken Buchanan died within half an hour.

Everyone was celebrating VE Day in England, but my mother would not until she knew Ken was safe. She was not informed of his death until 10 days later but obviously knew something was wrong because the letters stopped. She was devastated and has never remarried.

Now, all these years later, she has given me the letters my father wrote to her and I am in the process of cataloguing and typing them up. When I started reading them I just could not put them down, they are so interesting, like a diary – they have made me laugh and made me cry! Through these letters I have now got to know and love my father who so tragically died when I was 3 months old.

He is buried alongside 1354 Canadian servicemen in Holten Cemetery, Holland. On 4th May 2005, my Mother and I (she is now 91) went over on a coach trip with other Canadian Veterans to visit three of the Canadian Cemeteries

where Remembrance Services were to be held; Groesbeek, Apeldoorn and Holten. Many veterans had come over from Canada and there were at least 6000 people at each ceremony, many of them Dutch who do an absolutely fantastic job looking after all the graves.

On 4th May (the day my parents were married) Mum and I walked together for the first time into Holten Cemetery for the Service and to visit my father's grave. We had been before separately but not together, so this particular 60th Anniversary was a very very emotional time for us.

The one thing I will never forget was when a helicopter flew over and dropped thousands of red poppies, which floated down so quietly and gently... you could hear a pin drop in spite of all those people attending. There was not one dry eye that day and the thought of those poppies now still evokes such emotion within me. My Mother, husband and I are all active members of The Royal British Legion and totally support the Poppy Appeal and the wonderful work which is able to be done because of it.

LINDSAY BUCHANAN (DAUGHTER)

LEON KAMRAN

A LETTER TO THE WORLD THAT NEVER
WRITES BACK

What was meant to be two weddings and (fingers crossed) one hell of a time in Dubai and Pakistan, turned out to be two weddings (by the end of it all) and one funeral.

I must also admit I never realised how ungrateful I must have come across looking back at the events that unfolded in December 2007.

SLAMABAD, Pakistan (CNN) - Benazir Bhutto died from a fractured skull caused by hitting her head on part of her car's sunroof as a bomb ripped through a crowd of her supporters, a spokesman for Pakistan's Interior Ministry said Friday.

"When she was thrown by the force of the shockwave of the explosion, unfortunately one of the levers of the sunroof hit her," said spokesman Brigadier Javed Iqbal Cheema.

The explanation is the latest from the Interior Ministry. It initially said Bhutto was killed by shots fired by the bomber, and then, via the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan, it said the cause of death was a shrapnel injury.

But Farzana Raja of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party told CNN the government's explanation is "a pack of lies," she told CNN. Raja also accused the government of a "total security lapse."

The News: Every so often I would catch the end of what would come across as a pretentious two-minute piece on a

“war torn country” having trouble in the way it is being run, and what affect it is having on the population.

Honestly I'd look at those 'two-minute wonders' and so long as one of those countries mentioned in the report I had relatives who were fine, I wouldn't really care at all. Being born in Pakistan but having lived in England since the age of five, and the following twenty years of my parents telling me that the way back home (for them home is Pakistan) is being run is purely on corruption and nothing else didn't really hit home until our last visit.

Our three-week “holiday” started off in Dubai which was great. But in that December of 2007 one of my opinions would change. As I mentioned our family were going over to Pakistan via a two-week stay in Dubai (which couldn't be any further away on the scale to the events in Pakistan). This was an honest to God life changing experience. Having reluctantly left Dubai for the Karachi to attend one of my uncles (from my father's side) wedding which was amazing to be a part of, as he is two years younger and from Holland, so he is like a cousin or a friend, so good times were had in that wedding - amazing. Then a few days later we packed up and readied ourselves for another journey, albeit a brief one from Karachi to Lahore.

Having arrived at the airport in Karachi everything was okay, we'd checked in said our goodbyes for the time being to the relatives that had come to see us off, and finally we boarded the plane for the journey to Lahore.

The second wedding was supposed to be on the 28th of December the wedding we were going to was of my aunty from my mother's side. My mother has always been a favourite of my great uncle and aunts - my mother has always been one for keeping abreast of things back in Pakistan, barring a few exceptions, her side of the family have always been laid back and are always close. Back, to our journey. The feeling I had in my gut on was a strange tense one. The news was broken to us via the taxi driver who was driving us within minutes of the event occurring, I didn't know how to react to this, having no connection to the PM elect. Having later researched into her policies, and the main policy I found which stuck out for me was what she wanted to implement

for woman's rights. Bhutto promised to repeal controversial laws (sucas Hudood* and Zina** ordinances) that curtail the rights of women in Pakistan. Woman are portrayed as second class citizens in Pakistan but the truth of the matter is they are only get second class treatment if they are lucky, it is a deep and quite sickly of how it works out in Pakistan, no matter the religion.

The journey on the taxi I am told lasted a lot longer than it should. When we eventually made it to my grandpa's home the neighbours and general people were on the streets with only topic on their minds theories on what had just happened. To list them would be too much, but some of them were just out of the planet.

As the next day, and the following week proved the country was losing itself, whether it was orchestrated or not I am not too sure, but the country went out of control.

From unlawful occupation of homes and cars, people being mugged in broad daylight. Add that to one of my aunt's friends was raped on the way home from work. The factory my uncle was working set alight, kids on the streets with guns, children driving trucks and vans, with guns in one hand and steering wheel under the other. On top of which the electricity would be gone for an extra long (before the assassination when things were 'relatively normal' the electricity would be gone for an hour or two. But for some reason now it would be 4-5 hours added to that. The water would be gone for what felt like forever). My auntie's wedding went ahead but we were warned it was at our own risk and boy we tried to make the best of a situation, it was like a social gathering from Marjane Satrapi's "Persepolis". Armed guards outside the hall where the reception was held, having never experienced that sort of thing I couldn't and cannot still get my head my head around it all.

It was ten days of the most sickening experience, not allowed to go anywhere in case of being attacked I have experienced meanwhile being at home feeling like a concentration camp scenario. After the passing of my cousin's death in April 2004, I'd rank it as number two on a list.

Having never looked back on the experience until now I have realised what my parents were talking about and how

they felt for their country and what potential it had and was being used and abused because certain people could not bear to see Bhutto as PM again, couldn't face change again, in my view, because she was a woman.

Although I still carry a sense not belonging to either England or Pakistan,

I still look back at the events we all endured in Pakistan (I am not saying that one shouldn't feel sad or upset when one is hurt) but I always try to remember those times on our trip as a way of getting over any issue that might bring me down, and honestly for that I am grateful.

This year please remember that not all wars and conflicts are over. Be grateful for the freedoms you have and try and remember what price others around the world are currently paying for only the hope of freedom. Freedom is still too high a commodity for some.

*Hudud also transliterated hadud, hudood; singular hadd

Literal meaning limit or restriction; is the word often used in Islamic literature for the bounds of acceptable behaviour and the punishments for serious crimes. In Islamic law or Sharia, hudud usually refers to the class of punishments that are fixed for certain crimes that are considered to be "claims of God." They include theft, fornication, consumption of alcohol, and apostasy.

** Zéna is extramarital sex and premarital sex. Islamic law prescribes punishments for Muslim men and women for the act of Zéna.

Islamic law considers this prohibition to be for the protection of men and women and for the respect of marriage. Zéna is considered one of the great sins in Islam. In addition to the punishments rendered before death, sinners are punished severely after death, unless purged of their sins by a punishment according to shari'a law.

LEON KAMRAN

*As of 5th November 2011 an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan has charged two senior police officers over the 2007 assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Source: BBC News.

MARGARET TINDALE

ROYAL AIR FORCE (AIR TRAFFIC)

The last time my son (who is serving in the RAF), was sent out to Iraq in July of 2007, we kept in touch via e-mails. He landed at Basra Airport where he was to stay and work.

His first e-mail was to let me know he had arrived safely. It was dark and hot. "I hit the ground running," he said, and the situation was much worse than when he was there the time before. "On my way to my accommodation block, I had to dive to the ground three times to avoid incoming rockets; I wouldn't mind, but it's ruining my trousers."

During his time at Basra, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown paid a visit. They were looking forward to his arrival, so that he could see for himself what the conditions were like out there as they were receiving incoming rockets in every half hour that passed. Well, Gordon Brown arrived, and for the duration of his stay, not one rocket was fired, but within the half hour after he had departed the rockets started arriving again. "The term Sod's Law comes to mind, typical".

At the end of every e-mail I sent to him I always ended by saying, "Keep well, keep safe, and I love you lots." On one occasion after getting many of my e-mails, he said, "I do what I can to stay safe Mum, I never thought I would ever hear myself say this, but I do want to be 42."

My heart goes out to the families and friends of all who are serving in the armed forces, it is not easy coping with the

separation, and I pray for each and every one who is deployed to a war zone for their safe return. God bless them all.

Remembrance is so important to us all, including our children, and so that one day they may understand, we must teach them that our Poppies act as a reminder of conflicts past and present, when young men bravely fought bloody battles to help keep us at home, safe and free; free from oppression and free from harm.

These young men, some barely out of school, left the warmth and comfort of their homes and families to face danger, some sadly, never to return.

It is exactly the same today; so when you next see a soldier, sailor or airman, smartly dressed in uniform, please remember he or she might have just returned from a war zone or perhaps they are on the verge of being sent out to one.

We should all be proud of our armed forces, so wear your poppy to show your gratitude and that you truly care.

MARGARET TINDALE

A SOLDIER'S REVERIE

Came a lull in the fight in the searing heat,
I took rest in the shade of a tree;
And wondered if the folks back home
Ever thought of me.

I remember a windswept rainy town,
A snowy landscape from my door,
Spring time in the country,
A balmy breeze on the sandy shore.

Thoughts of Nancy in my arms,
And mother serving tea;
With father snoozing in the chair.
A picture of domesticity.

A shout goes up
"Incoming fire"
A whistle then a thud.
"That was a near one" someone said
Of a closely landed scud.

Awakened from my daydream,
Again I was on Red Alert,
With back pack and my weapon
Ran to aid those who might be hurt.

Our Corps lost a well loved soldier,
Another comrade lost an arm.
Dear God we pray lead the way
And save us all from harm.

We took a lot of flak that day,
And replied with fierce attack.
At last the guns fell silent;
That's when we hit the sack.

We count the days to going home,
And as the time draws near,
We get more anxious to survive
'Till we're with the ones that are so dear.

BY MARGARET TINDALE

DAVID KNOWLES

I suppose I had the normal boyhood fantasies of being a hero straight out of the pages of Victor comics. Dad had been in the 8th Army and Mum in the WAAF during the Second World War. Mum was awarded a Mention in Dispatches for helping to rescue a crew from a crashed bomber before it blew up.

Dad joined the police after the war and as a kid I remember we moved from police house to police house according to the dictates of the service. I left school having learnt nothing except how to have a good laugh and nick apples without getting caught. At thirteen I had a part time a job as an errand lad with the local Co-op, leaving school at fifteen to work there full time. I went to college to do courses for by the Co-op but at seventeen I got itchy feet. I decided to join up believing there had to be something more to life than a pit village.

The recruiting sergeant saw a tall freckled faced nail stood in front of him and my hopes of being a dashing cavalry officer on a magnificent steed disappeared during his speech on how the Army cannot run without communications and seeing as how my English was like wot it was, "it's the Royal Signals for you me lad."

I got the paperwork, went home and told Mum and Dad. Mum had a dicky fit and told Dad not to sign me up as I was only seventeen. Dad was quite chuffed but had to hide that from Mum and lectured me on how he would not buy me out even if it snowed.

On the 16th September 1964 I headed for Catterick Garrison;

11th Signal Regiment to be precise, to be bungled into a hut with other nails, pretending to be manly and not needing Mum. A whirlwind of clothing parades, shouting, bedding parades, more shouting, bulling of boots with additional shouting was capped with even louder shouting by demented people called Lance Jacks descending upon us with the same vicious delight as the camp barber.

Parade in the snow, PT in the snow, drill in the snow, infantry tactics in the snow and getting lost in the snow, with trade training later at 24th Signal Regiment, in the snow, made me ideally suited for my first posting to 209 Signal Squadron, Cherry Tree Camp, Colchester. Here I waited in the snow until I could be shipped out to join the Squadron who were in Borneo, which in those days was not part of Yorkshire apparently, but on a map somewhere.

At Singapore I was in Nee Soon transit camp with a Ghurkha regiment, I think the camp is where they filmed 'The Virgin Soldiers' later in 66. Not quite eighteen years old, and therefore not allowed out of the UK, I was told to bugger off and avail myself of curries and the swimming pool until my birthday a few days away. Eighteen years and one day old, a very sunburnt curry coloured Staff Op arrived at Sibul, Sarawak. I spotted the difference between Catterick and Borneo immediately - not much snow!

The Squadron office was like the rest of the camp; huts built on stilts called Bashas. The stilts were in readiness for the annual monsoon and the flooding that brings. I carefully noted the location of the dugout canoes and wondered why I had left Barnsley Bitter and Albert Hirsts' Championship Black Pudding, to come to a place that turns into night with rain.

You cannot see through and ball lightning that rolls over the tree tops with thunderous clatter, at two o'clock in the afternoon!

We pulled night guard which I hated. You walked the wire in pitch black seeing bugger all but convinced every snake within fifty miles and loads of creepy crawlies were intent on doing you in. Being a novice soldier stepping on soil half a world away was scary but exciting with day trips in the jungle exhilarating. I have never liked snakes and was not impressed

when on one occasion a native casually pointed out a "two step" coiled ready to strike twelve inches from my leg!

So I served from Borneo to Bulford, Catterick to Cyprus, Germany to Gan spending about five years with Strat Reserve units including 19th Inf Bde (Airportable) and 3rd Div HQ & Signal Regiment. We were kept out of trouble by constant tactical exercises all over the place, usually where it was coldest and wettest. Our camouflage discipline was so good we often could not find ourselves!

As a marksman I loved shooting, though sneaking off to blast the ranges had the drawback of having to clean the Bren, SLR, SMG and 9mm Browning all to the satisfaction of the camp armourer! At Warcop I was accused of knocking over a sheep at about 900 yards, uphill, with the SLR but I ask you - as if! Priming grenades was wonderful for focusing the mind.

Memories tease the mind as you get older. I will not relate many so as not to bore and what I have related so far will no doubt have some error. I never intended a career in the Army but wanted to have a go at it and I was not disappointed. Six years in the Corps gave me self-discipline and independence. You witnessed both tragedy and great times. Anyway, the good memories linger, not the bad.

Doing guard duty on a bitter winter morning in Germany or digging the stubborn chalk on Salisbury Plain may not sound like character building but it is and what's more miles better than being sat in a stately home on a 'bonding' away day from the office.

When I see service people today, seeing the pride they have in their cap badge, that's when you know it's OK; because that pride will always be there.

24018803 L/CPL KNOWLES D E ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS

HARRY SMITH

RAF VETERAN

Born in 1921 in Bromley I was probably too young to realise that the country was still recovering from The Great War. However by the time Hitler had reached power in the 1930s and World War II was approaching me I more than realised what was about to happen to my country. I first tried joining the Army in 1938 but having been found out that I was underage I was sent back home.

I remember as a young lad living in Bromley I had to go up to town for work. I worked in an office near London Bridge and I would be caught up in the Blitz as the bombs fell down. I can remember hearing the shrapnel hitting and splinters flying everywhere; the sound of it impacting on the streets, the homes and lives of London.

It was stupid really as I look back now wondering around the streets during the blitz my eyes trying to take in all what was happening around me. The sights, the sounds, the eternal memories burned into a mind so innocent. Yet today you read in the newspaper of signs up and down the country nailed on to trees, telling children not to play conkers because of health and safety. As soon as I could I joined the Royal Air Force and this time I wasn't going home; it was September 1941.

I served firstly in the 78th Bomber Command. Then I was stationed to Special Duties. Part of our ops were to drop supplies and ammo amongst other things. My time in special duties was divided between SOE and SOS missions these

covered the South of France, Crete, The Balkans and Poland. I flew 29 missions with the 78th and 22 missions with Special Forces. In total I flew 51 missions before being grounded and sent to Germany for the last four months of my service. The saying went once you had flown over 20 missions you were on borrowed time. Some didn't even make it back after one mission. We lost 186 aircraft over a two-year period at Bomber Command.

Each aircraft would carry seven souls. New recruits on their first mission would go with an experienced crew to be shown the ropes. Many didn't come back. Their first was their last. I flew 51 missions and I'm still here at 89 to share my story with you.

Time fades many things but not the memories of those I flew and served with or the things my innocent mind saw. Now I spend good times with good friends at my local RBL Club. I am very proud of my life and those people I have been lucky enough to meet; it is important that we learn from and continue to tell our stories. Our future generations and those serving today must continue where my generation left off. Doing our bit and playing our part so that all our future is safe and free. Please show your support by choosing not to forget.

HARRY SMITH



Solano Pena Lenzi. This photo was taken on the 4th November 1982 at Solano's first communion, Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Malvinas War had ended only a few months before.



Solano starting up Hispa-merchants here in the UK in 2003, twenty-one years after the Falklands war had ended. Regardless of our different backgrounds we can all work together, if we learn from the past.



This photo taken shortly after Benazir Bhutto's motorcade was attacked. This was just the start of the aftermath that unfolded over the days and weeks of Leon's trip back home.



As Leon's car drove past you can clearly see the burn marks and devastation on the floor outside of the car on the street. The ground is scorched black from the blast.



Keeping up moral, William Turnbull his fellow servicemen, crossing the equator on board the RMS Empress of Russia, also on board was Midshipman Phillip Mount-batten. The RMS Empress of Russia had been commissioned by the British Admiralty as a troop transport vessel in 1941.



After crossing the equator and arriving in North Africa an impromptu game of football was arranged. The note on the back of the photo reads 'Blighty 4-1 Germany!'



On the deck of the USS Arizona Pre 1941. Image courtesy of The Great War Primary Document Archive.



USS Arizona Memorial. US Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 3rd Class Jayme Pastoric. Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Hawai'i. You can see the ship below the surface of the water and the public memorial above. Image courtesy of the US Navy.



The war grave of Ken Buchanan, Holten Cemetery, Holland.



Ken Buchanan, seen here in his uniform.



Left and below: Ken with his family.





Ken Buhcanan and his famous drum.



Sergeant John 'Mucky' Mason.



The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu at the dedication of a memorial sculpture at Lissett Aerodrome, near Driffeld, to honour those airmen and women who gave their lives during the Second World War.



The castle at Monte Cassino in Italy today.



Memorial inside Dohány utcai Zsinagóga (Dohány Street Synagogue) Budapest, Hungary. A stark reminder of the victims murdered in the Holocaust and those who gave everything to the relief and rescue effort.



יסדל בדרת ושפל נדל בבי תעורר
 חלל מוסכת על בניה
 ירמיהו הא יזה
 לזכרם
 של שש באת אלף יחדיו חנניה נחיש שמואל בשואח
 אשר מקרה את עמנו במלחמת העולם השנייה
 ולזכרם
 של חסידות העיר והחבלה בעורפנו אשר חרפו מנשם
 לרצח למעשה מאציק והלכ האנשים
 ביחדם
 ישראל קמנו
 נשן קומנו
 זאל ורנני בנרד
 צבי שילד
 נשאל נשור נמנו
 כל תפקידים נמש אחת מישראל מלחמה ליהושע
 באילו קיים עולם נרא
 (מנחם דין לו)



Cipők a Dunaparton (Shoes on the Danube Bank) is a memorial on the banks of the Danube River in Budapest, Hungary. Conceived by film director Can Togay with sculptor Gyula Pauer to honor the Jews who were murdered by members of the Arrow Cross militiamen in 1944 during World War II.



A tour group at Dohány utcai Zsinagóga (Dohány Street Synagogue) in Budapest, Hungary. These educational guided tours offer an insight into how the Jewish community were persecuted in Hungary during WWII and show how today many different cultures and religious backgrounds visit the synagogue united.



Writing the words of history. Courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

PETER FRANCIS

HEAD OF EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH AND WAR
GRAVES COMMISSION

It is difficult for those of us who have grown up with remembrance, the 11th of November, the two-minute silence and the red poppy, to appreciate that remembrance of the war dead as we know it is a relatively new phenomenon. We have taken these cornerstones of remembrance for granted but it is unlikely they would exist – or the war dead be remembered still – were it not for the work of remarkable organisations like The Royal British Legion and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

These two organisations, both of which grew out of the devastation and loss of the Great War, have a very special and symbiotic relationship.

Following the First World War, the Commission, for the very first time on such a scale, memorialised the Commonwealth's sacrifice in stone and in peaceful gardens. For the first time, war cemeteries and memorials that commemorated men and women equally, without distinction on account of their military or civil rank, race or creed, were built across the globe – each a moving physical reminder of the human costs of this conflict and later, the Second World War also.

Today these war graves, cemeteries and memorials can be found at some 23,000 locations in 150 countries. They commemorate in perpetuity the sacrifice of 1.7 million

Commonwealth servicemen and women. As an organisation, we are proud of the duty we have to keep these sacred places to the highest standard and our dedicated staff – some 1,200 strong – Labour Day in and day out to meet that duty.

These places – the graves, memorials, cemeteries, gardens – are the very fabric upon which our remembrance is focussed. They not only ensure those who died are remembered with the dignity their sacrifice so richly deserves, but as individuals and Commonwealth nations, they give our grief, our pride and our thanks, physical focus. In return they bring great comfort to us all.

But the war cemeteries and memorials are just one element of remembrance. For the First World War spawned another remarkable organisation – one that not only cared about remembering those who died in that terrible conflict but also about addressing the needs of those who had survived (sometimes with terrible physical or psychological injuries) and their dependents.

As part of that need, the Legion recognised that there was a human need to visit the cemeteries and memorials being constructed by the Commission overseas. They organised some of the first pilgrimages to these places – something that thankfully they still do today through Poppy Travel.

After all, the cemeteries and memorials were made to be visited and the Legion does so much to keep alive the memory of those who died – in the same way as we do at the Commission – by taking an ever growing number of pilgrims, of all ages, to these sacred places.

Some come out of curiosity, others to mourn or simply pay their respects, others to learn, but all depart the better for the experience – that is the power these sacred places have and the importance of that special relationship that exists between our two organisations.

In addition to all the vital work the Legion does to serve our veteran community, these “custodians of Remembrance” have done so much to ensure that we as individuals and as a nation will never forget the men and women of our armed forces. Their fundraising and awareness campaigns have brought remembrance back on to the national agenda and they should be greatly praised for that. It is no underestimation to

state that today; millions observe the two-minute silence or wear the red poppy with pride.

Equally, our two organisations work closely together to engage a new generation in our work and the importance of remembrance. By engaging with teachers and students, by taking them to the cemeteries and memorials, and by developing education resources to meet their interest and needs, we are helping to keep remembrance relevant and alive for the future. We see the importance of this work only increasing as we move further away from the two world wars.

The twentieth century’s two great wars have done much to shape today’s world and the debt we owe to those who fought cannot be overestimated. The veterans, their ranks sadly thinning now, have had a chance to speak for themselves. They have told us how it was to fight, to be parted from family, to lose comrades. We know the lessons we should learn from their sacrifice. But the dead are silent. We have to look to what they left behind for their testimony, and must find it in the ranks of headstones and panels of names that remain. They have a message for the twenty-first century, and it is the Legion’s and the Commission’s duty to give them a voice.

As the famous poet John McCrae said, “If ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep thought poppies grow in Flanders Fields.” For almost 100 years the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, The Royal British Legion and the public of the Commonwealth have kept that faith. The challenge is clear; the soldiers still speak from the stone of our cemeteries and memorials. They challenge us to remember them and the answer should always be yes.

PETER FRANCIS

BARBARA PARKER

THE GHOST GUNNER OF MONTE CASSINO

Being part of the baby-boomer generation of 1946, I was to grow up hearing some stories of a war, now in the past, which had shaped my parents' lives. Their children were told certain things about that war, the things that could be told to them. Some stories were repeated to children who, on the whole, saw those times as wholly irrelevant to their lives - but some stories resonate and are always remembered. My own father's story was of a ghost gun at Monte Cassino in Italy.

In April 1944 the Allies faced the Germans across the Gustav Line in central Italy. Since the Gustav Line was almost impregnable, something of a stalemate existed between the two sides. There had been three costly and bloody battles as the Allies attempted to break through the Line and now my father, with the 2nd Battalion of The Lancashire Fusiliers, was positioned within a few yards of the Germans who held the high ground where the famous and beautiful, but now badly bombed, Monastery of Monte Cassino stood. The conditions were terrible for the nerves. During daylight hours, my father's platoon on Machine Gun Ridge was unable to move without being observed or heard by the Germans. It was a case of lying completely still for the daylight hours. No tea could be brewed and even visiting the toilet had to wait until darkness fell. In these circumstances it became important for those, whose nerves became stretched to impossible limits, to

be able to feel they could strike back at an enemy who seemed to hold all the cards. Getting supplies up the steep slopes to any of the troops (including the Germans) was incredibly difficult and not possible by vehicles. 600 heavily laden mules made the journey to supply the forward troops of the Allies every night and all the Germans ammunition had to make the same torturous journey. A plan was therefore devised to get the Germans to expend as much of that precious ammunition as possible. My father was approached by his Commanding Officer to this end and the idea of the ghost gun of Monte Cassino was born.

The Vickers Machine Gun was my father's favourite weapon of the war – he knew every inch of it and enjoyed teaching others how to use it and to revere it. A Vickers Machine gun was to be cited over the crest of Machine Gun Ridge in no-man's land where it would be operated by remote control. The first night my father, together with his CO and Company Commander, made their way over the crest of the ridge and sought a suitable place for the gun. When one had been found, they threaded the mechanism of the gun with wire which had to be wedged around the numerous rocks leading from the gun, over the crest of Machine Gun Ridge and back to my father's sangar – even in his 90s my father could still remember the complicated procedure. They all breathed deeply and pulled at the length of wire but the gun failed to fire which meant another perilous trip out to relocate the line. Once back again, however, this time a firm tug on the wire produced a welcome and resounding blast from the gun. After the successful positioning, the gun was to be sighted every night at a different window of the Monastery and the Germans would receive a blast. They would fire back getting more frustrated as time went on and, each time, after they had expended huge amounts of their precious ammunition trying to locate the gun, my father would give another pull on the wire as a rude gesture designed to infuriate them even more. My father kept a gratifying log of how much ammunition the Germans wasted on the gun and each time he crawled out to reload and re-sight the gun he told me he was rewarded by the sight of massive shell holes all around the area. The fame of the ghost gun spread throughout the forward pent

up troops (and far beyond) giving them something to liven up their dreary days of stalemate and when the captured German prisoners discovered later what they had been firing at, they found the whole thing just as amusing.

Although long ago, it seems this story is not forgotten, as recently my father has been chosen to represent the Distinguished Conduct Medal in a commemoration package by the Royal Mail and the Royal Mint and, although the medal was not awarded for operating the ghost gun, the story has been included in the write-up.

In May last year I visited Italy and went to see the site of the ghost gun which, when viewed from the Monastery, was terrifyingly close. After the war was over, the building was restored and it is now a beautiful and peaceful monastery once more. On Machine Gun Ridge and all the surrounding areas green vegetation has sprung up to cover the barren and devastated land of WW2 photographs. One could almost walk through that place and not know what suffering had taken place. However the Polish Cemetery close by is a moving tribute to the fall of the Monastery itself whilst Cassino War Cemetery, which also lies at the foot of Monastery Hill, stuns visitors by its beauty. Many veterans visit these cemeteries but there are also many younger visitors who feel a great need to pay their respects to the bravery and suffering of their ancestors. Remembrance is our tribute and we are surely the poorer if we do not take time to reflect on the suffering and bravery of those who lived in a time hardly imaginable by ourselves. For younger generations, it must be vital that they know the possible.

By a strange coincidence, only recently, I had the opportunity of firing a SAT (Small Arms Trainer) Vickers Machine Gun, which had been set up in a museum for the public to try. I have never fired a gun before but, to me and my family's complete surprise, I actually gained the highest score. I somehow think my father would have liked to know that!

BARBARA PARKER

'GINGE'

My nickname is Ginge; I'm a recovery mechanic or 'reccy mech' for short. I was on a tour of duty with Op Herrick 7, from September 2007 to March 2008. It's a surreal feeling doing all your training to prepare yourself to go out to Afghan, hearing all the stories and seeing all the videos, but it doesn't actually prepare yourself for what it's like over there. They tell you to don your body armour and helmet before a fast landing into Kandahar due to possibilities of rocket and small arms fire. I remember thinking, "Shit, I haven't even landed in the country and I'm about to get blown out of the sky." You get off the plane at night and are herded around like cattle until you've booked in and gotten everything sorted, all still in a bit of daze from everything that's going on. The first Op I went on was a resupply to a fob called Inkerman which the lads had nicknamed "Incoming", and for good reason. The camp got smashed on a daily basis with rockets and small arms. I found myself spending seven weeks in that small dust filled shithole. The compound was bare. There was almost nothing in it and almost no shelter. People pitched up ponchos or ripped up bits of parachute off the HESCO that were made into a very basic form of shelter from the sun.

I remember the first time a rocket came over the wall. We were all just sitting there reading books, chilling out and messing around, and all of a sudden we heard a loud explosion and shit ourselves. We froze, looking around at the other lads to see what they were doing. For a moment we all just stared

at each other, then one by one we just started laughing for a few seconds more and then at lightning speed we began getting our body armour and helmets on and grabbing our rifles. We didn't actually know what to do, or where to go so we just huddled up near the HESCO and our trucks that provided a bit of shelter. We then heard small arms fire. You could hear the 'click-clack' of the rounds whizzing over our heads at the speed of sound, then one or two more explosions. We knew that they were either RPG's, or mortar fire. As soon as we heard them, we looked around to see where they had hit. Sometimes they would land in the camp, but most of the time they went right over the top of us.

We heard a bloke shouting in the distance "F*****ING GET TO THE HESCO AND FIRE BACK!" We got there and were all a bit unsure whether to fire and uneasy at the idea, having never before fired our rifles at or actually planned to do so at a live target. We nervously looked over the wall, wanting to keep our heads down and trying to look for a firing point for something to shoot at. We were bobbing up and down quickly to try and avoid being targets ourselves. People were firing at two different positions; two compounds about 600 metres away and 150 metres apart, the whole time giggling like little girls. The lads and I were laughing and cracking jokes the whole time, probably from a mix of adrenalin and confusion, it was a mess, I didn't know what was going on. Aiming my rifle I could just see one little dot in the distance bobbing around then disappearing for a bit, then popping up a few metres away in a different place. There were no marksmanship skills in the hasty shot I took. I fired one round in that general direction. Shortly after, fast air support came in and dropped a 500 pounder on one of the compounds and the firefight was over. In all, the contact lasted for about an hour but it seemed like just a few minutes.

We spent the rest of the day laughing and cracking jokes to each other and taking the mick out of each other about how we'd reacted, soon enough though it all became second nature to us. As soon as we heard the bang of a mortar or the whistle of an RPG, we would all spring into action, donning helmets and body armour, grabbing our rifles and running to our firing positions on the wall. As the days went on and started

to mesh together I took the GPMG (general purpose machine gun) off the wagon and put it on the wall as it seemed like the firefights were getting worse and starting to last longer. The jimpy, as it's also called, is a brilliant toy, it fires hundreds of rounds a minute and shreds anything that gets in its way. We used to take it in turns during contacts, switching who got to play with it, sometimes firing 800 rounds in one contact.

There were more than a few close calls. There had been a few casualties from shrapnel in one firefight but nothing serious. We spent the days laughing and cracking jokes with each other, reading and writing letters back home and having a bit of banter with each other to keep morale up and messing about with the ANA lads who were always trying to sell us stuff. One ANA lad whom we had nicknamed Gary because we couldn't pronounce his name, used to always get us cigarettes and cans of Coke. On one occasion he was even trying to sell me a chicken and said he could get me a monkey as a pet. I was really tempted to buy the monkey, name it Pedro, and teach it to dance for a laugh. Obviously though, I had nowhere to put it, so under those conditions, I decided to follow my better judgement and not get it.

One day there was a loud bang in the distance that wasn't a mortar or a rocket. Me and the other reccy mech looked at each other saying that it had to be a mine strike, not a contact. Shortly after a sergeant came over to us and told us what had happened. A heavily armoured Viking vehicle had rolled over an anti-tank mine about a kilometre away and they needed us to go and get it. He then added that it was a possibility that the vehicle was in a minefield and said not to worry, there was a path being cleared for us. Me and my mate just stared at each other, thinking, "Great, this is all we need now..." with the thought that it could end badly at the back of our minds. We quickly jumped onto our wagon, a Foden recovery truck and were slowly led to the destroyed Viking. There were other vehicles on the high ground providing fire support so we could do the job without getting attacked. The Viking was totally destroyed, with a massive hole in the bottom under the passenger seat where the explosion had ripped through the cab and the rubber tracks were almost touching the ceiling. An officer came over and gave us a quick brief on what had

happened. There had been two Royal Marines in the vehicle, a driver and a top cover. Both had survived with minor injuries, if you can call two broken ankles on the driver and the gunner being blown clear out the top minor injuries. Both had a few cuts and bruises but nothing life threatening. I remember looking at the vehicle and wondering how anyone could survive a blast with that much destructive force.

After spending a moment working out how we were going to recover the vehicle we made a plan and got on with the job. We knew we had to work fast as the sun was going down quickly and we only had a few hours of light left. Even at that time the heat was almost unbearable, the sweat was pouring off of us and the adrenaline was kicking in. We had to first remove all the twisted bits of armour and metal that was in our way before we could hook the vehicle up to tow it. When we finally hooked it up and tried to drive away, the sand was too soft and the wheels of the Foden were just spinning. The Viking's tracks had been damaged that much that it was digging into the sand like an anchor making it almost impossible for us to move. We were on a slope as well, which didn't help matters. Eventually we had to disconnect the Viking, with every footstep thinking we could be about to stand on a mine. We drove off about 50 feet and decided to get the winch out to see if we could winch it to the top of the slope. Luckily, the damaged tracks underneath broke free and the rest of the vehicle rolled over it, dragging across the sand, but at least we were moving. Another Viking vehicle pulled in front of us and we put a strop from our Foden over to it to help us get enough extra power to pull the damaged Viking. Once the vehicle was at the top of the slope we hooked it up again ready to tow and thankfully now with the strop and the help of the second Viking we had enough traction to move forward, albeit at a very slow pace.

By this time the night had crept in so fast and the sun had disappeared. We had to get back soon as we had no NVGs (night vision goggles) with us. It was pitch black and with no light we couldn't see the Viking in front of us because it was kicking up so much sand and dust. All I could see was about a metre of the strop connected to the front of the Foden going into the dark. I was standing with one foot on the driver's

seat, the other on the accelerator with my face almost pressed up against the windscreen looking at the strop, paying attention to which way it was going and turning with it. We were only a kilometre away from camp but it seemed like it was taking hours to get there. For some reason the visual map in my head wasn't corresponding with where we were going and it seemed like we had driven right past the camp. Then all of a sudden on both sides of the vehicle we saw towering walls and knew we had reached the gate of camp. And with that sight, came the big relief, knowing we had returned in one piece. We positioned the vehicle in the centre of camp and decided to leave it there until the morning. We then walked back over to our pits talking to each other about the job and how crazy it was that we'd never done anything like that before. I finally got into my sleeping bag and my last thought I had to myself before falling asleep was, "This is gonna be a long six months!"

This year not only remember those who have fallen, but those who continue to stand and fight.

GINGE

PAUL DEPREY

SUPERINTENDENT, WORLD WAR II VALOR
IN THE PACIFIC NATIONAL MONUMENT

As US National Park Service Superintendent in Pearl Harbor, I perform my duties as a service to my country. These duties include making every effort to enhance our guests' understanding of the events leading up to the Attack on December 7, 1941, the Pacific War, and the consequences of that war.

As a practical matter, I work to maintain a high level of professionalism and historical accuracy in the materials that are presented to the public and the manner in which my staff interacts with the public. For many, a visit to our site provides a critical learning opportunity about the events of December 7, 1941 and the war that followed.

As generations pass, we seek out the best methods to preserve the personal stories of the Pacific War and to present them to current and future generations. The design of new exhibitory, interpretive signage, display of historic artefacts and video presentations of oral histories all work to connect visitors to the people who witnessed the attack and the war that followed.

The reason such care has gone into the presentation of the personal narrative is so that their relevance as individuals is not lost. War and conflict may be traditionally presented as troop movements and technological advance, but the most compelling impact is the human experience.

As events fade into the past, greater efforts must be made to present the significance of key moments in history. We can too easily be distracted by the 24-hour news/entertainment cycle. At Pearl Harbor, we try to provide visitors with a glimpse of the past so they may understand why the events unfolded in the manner that they did—and the consequences of those events.

Providing a critical view of the events of the Attack on December 7, 1941 will improve our visitors' ability to perceive historical events with greater clarity—and improve an appreciation for the historic antecedents of current political and economic realities.

Keeping the memory of those who gave their lives, their individual deaths, can at best mark only a rough impact to the terrible nature of war. Each death represented someone's child, spouse, or sibling. Families and communities were bereft of the presence of their loved ones and forever carried the burden of being a survivor through terrible times.

The National Park Service acts as stewards of the USS Arizona Memorial, the USS Utah Memorial and the USS Oklahoma Memorials in Pearl Harbor. These memorials honour the sacrifice of individuals who lost their lives in the first battle of the Pacific War. In this fashion these structures function as war memorials. Each memorial also speaks to the enduring wish for a world in which conflict is reduced; for times when there is more cooperation than conflict; and for a future where bitter enemies no longer carry the burden of animosity. In this latter fashion, they function as peace memorials—and a meaning that serves to honour those whose names are carved in stone. The relevance of this latter meaning is greater in times such as now when we yearn for a more peaceful world.

As the National Park Service Superintendent at Pearl Harbor, I oversee not just historic structures made of marble and granite; they are the physical pledges of remembrance of those who are no longer with us. They are our hopes for a better world than the one we live in.

PAUL DEPREY, WORLD WAR II VALOR IN
THE PACIFIC NATIONAL MONUMENT

NICOLA REEVES

WESTERHAM ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
CLUB IS A REAL TRADITIONAL CLUB

The building hasn't been modernised and it almost felt like a step back in time the first time I visited, although the furniture is old everything inside and outside is spotless. They have a beautiful visitor's book on a shelf specially built for the purpose and it was used. One of the Committee members called Keith, was an elderly gentleman but very wise and extremely humble a pure English Gentleman.

And then the story unfolded. Out came a visitors book, signed on the 1st August 1928 by Sir Winston Churchill and underneath his wife Clementine had signed. Keith pointed to a picture of Churchill and yet again it was signed by the man himself. Keith took me outside and showed me a foundation stone that had been laid by Churchill's daughter Diana Spencer Churchill. When sitting back down I turned around and on the window sill in a very simple photo frame was a signature by Vera Lynn.

It made me very proud to be British and the Westerham Club incorporates everything what The Royal British Legion used to stand for, I almost felt like it should be part of the English Heritage and protected because of the history for people to visit and see!

On my last visit, only several weeks ago Keith showed me a signed picture of Queen Elizabeth and King George VI.

Supporting The Royal British Legion helps provide practical support for those that need it today and Westerham plays a vital role. Please remember those who died but also remember those alive today. In the 90th year of The Royal British Legion, choose to remember.

NICOLA REEVES FBII CBA (EAST)

ANGELA GOFFE

My dad didn't talk about the war very much but occasionally he would recount an incident, usually brought on by daily events.

Me and my dad were sitting in the little kitchen in my parents' house in Quinton, Birmingham, a far cry from his childhood house in a little village in Serbia. It had started to snow, not much at first, but then the flakes got bigger and within minutes everything was white.

I said, "Look the snow is coming down so fast I can hardly see the trees at the bottom of the garden, and its gone really cold, shall we move into the lounge?"

My dad stayed where he was and gazed out of the window deep in thought. Then he said, "This isn't cold and that snow will be gone in an hour."

"During the war I fought for the King and was captured by Tito's communist regime. It was my job to escape as often as I could to get messages to my comrades containing information we had learned. One night I escaped in a snowstorm, the kind where you can't even see your next step. I decided to take refuge in a trench and lay there for a few hours completely covered in snow. I must have fallen asleep, because when I woke up the snow had stopped and the temperature had dropped so low I could barley move. I was frozen to the bottom of the trench, but managed to free myself leaving most of my coat behind. I had to get myself moving so I walked for a while and it started snowing again. I came to an old barn and removed a piece of wood from the wall, creeping inside

so as not to disturb the animals. I have never felt heat like it. It felt so warm in that barn, the heat from the animals. I lay in a corner, covered myself in hay and waited until it was dark. In the barn I heard rustling and some laboured breathing. Others were in there too and from what I heard they were in a worse state than me, but I ignored them and they ignored me. When it was dark enough I crept out of the barn, put the message in the secret place and wandered around waiting to be captured and taken back to the camp until the next time a message needed to be delivered."

"You think this is cold, you think that is heavy snow. Believe me when I tell you it's not."

ANGELA GOFFE

DEDICATED TO THE LOVING MEMORY OF
ZIVOJIN PETROVIC 1923 - 2009

NI BELL

George Ernest Knowles was in the army. He fought the entire war on the front line. In the early part of 1944 he fought at Monte Cassino, Italy. He was part of the famous allied D-Day landings on June 6th 1944 on the infamous, Gold (British), Utah (American), Sword (British), Juno (Canadian) and Omaha (American) beaches in Northern France. He was also a member of the Desert Rats and led the line in Africa under the command of General Montgomery. While serving in the Desert Rats, my grandad Knowles and three others became separated from the rest of their regiment and became stranded behind enemy lines. They ambushed a German patrol killing the soldiers.

Taking his bayonet, he pierced one of the soldier's lungs preventing him from screaming while he died in his arms. My grandad Knowles never forgot the face of the boy he had to kill and his blue eyes. To his dying day my grandad could not have a knife in his house with a point on it.

Edith Marjorie Ledger was instrumental in my education on remembrance. She was in the WAAF and fought the war on two fronts; firstly against the enemy and secondly against an infrastructure dominated by male chauvinism. Women and their equal rights were still decades away. She refused to work in the kitchens when arriving at the R.A.F base and was soon sent to work on the Wellington Bombers as an engineer. She was a natural at out witting her superiors, and was born way ahead of her time. She changed the way the spark plugs were fitted in the engines of these huge flying machines. The

key benefits of this enabled them to start instantly and fly for longer, making them more reliable. The pilots now only had the Luftwaffe to concentrate on to stop them from falling out of the sky. By the end of the war my nannan became one of only six women to be decorated with the Royal Oak Leaf by King George VI and mentioned in dispatches. The military records of my nannan remain classified and are not yet available for public record. She would marry George Ernest Knowles. My nan lived until she was 91. These are my mother's parents.

Thomas Parry Bell found the War – or I should say the war found him and making him like so many others an unlikely hero. In the August of 1939 he and his friends were all members of the local chapel football team. They all decided to join the Territorial Army and go away for a week, which they did, little knowing that on September 3rd war would be declared. They were all transferred to the York and Lancashire regiment, and, that was the end of their week away. Unfortunately only three of them returned after the war. Thomas Parry Bell became a Corporal and went to many different places serving his country during in the war. At some point he and his friend were captured in Belgium but managed to escape – little details are known. My grandad Bell, later sailed with the flotillas that went back and forth numerous times between England and Dunkirk, from May 26th – June 4th 1940 helping to evacuate his fellow servicemen.

Nellie Ashurst is where my education on remembrance really sank in. She would tell me the stories of my family and her nursing years during the war. She saw the devastating effect metal and fighting did to the human body first hand. I have never known a woman to have seen so much yet remain so gentle throughout her life. Grandma Bell, as she would become, also witnessed how it destroyed the human soul and gave it nightmares. My grandma would try in vain to heal, when there was no doubt left, she reassured. Her eyes were the last sense of hope and decency, many dying soldiers saw. Her eyes reflected the true cost of war. She had two brothers who both fought in World War II. My great uncle Frank, who you have already met in the beginning of this book, he was a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery's 68th Anti-Tank Regiment, and their brother Arthur. My great uncle Arthur was in the

Coldstream Guards and he was killed 23rd April 1945, aged 19. His headstone is at Coriano Ridge War Cemetery in Northern Italy.

For many years during my early teens, every Saturday morning I would meet my grandma in town. We would go shopping around Barnsley market. Some weekends we would do the 'big shop' and go to the local supermarket. One year on Remembrance Day, we stood still in silence on an isle stocked with cans and packets. You could hear a pin drop. This was the first time I was old enough to remember my grandma's eyes fill with tears. Despite the occasion, not one left her eyes and rolled down her cheek. She would marry Thomas Parry Bell. They were my father's parents.

These are my stories.

NI BELL



Frank Ashurst, my great uncle.



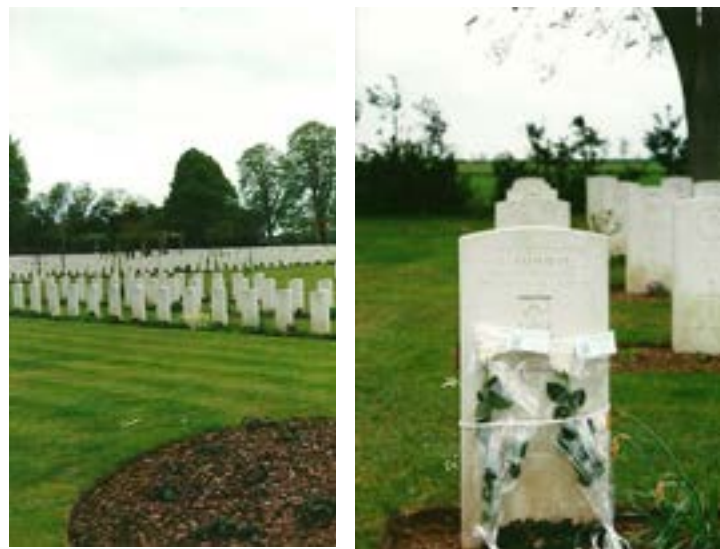
Arthur Ashurst, my great uncle.



The Cenotaph in Whitehall, London has played host to the Remembrance Service for the past nine decades.



Caterpillar Valley Cemetery. Image courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Line after Line at Banneville-La-Campagne War Cemetery, France.



Ginge and his patrol near their target in Afghanistan.



The patrol observes for enemy fire in Afghanistan.



Out in the dessert British troops stop before going ahead into enemy territory.





Working under pressure to get the job done in time.



As it starts to get dark the team hurry to complete their mission.



After an IED goes off in Afghanistan.



'Ginge'



Margaret Tindale and her son before he left for Iraq.



Zivojin Petrovic in 1946 and below with daughter Angela in 1977.



Westerham RBL Club.





Hort Ops, France. Courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

SILENT THEY WERE
NO HEROES TALES HAD THEY
TO TELL
NOT TO US AT LEAST

BUT TO WHO THEN
THE CHUMS LEFT BEHIND
PERHAPS NOT EVEN THEM

ALL THAT AWFUL HISTORY
HOW COULD A SOUL BE SO BIG
TO HIDE WITHIN...

THEN DO YOUR DUTY AND
REMEMBER THEM AND HOW
THEY COULD NOT FORGET!

M KNOWLES

FACTS AND FIGURES

While doing research for this book I have been privileged to view first hand numerous official and classified letters, photographs and documents. The more and more documents, photos, letters and e-mails I received from people along with my own research I discovered just how facts and figures sterilise war into reality. It makes very stark reading when doing research. In this section you will find only a few of the facts I came across during my research. I only share a few to encourage you to find out more on your own. I urge you to use your local libraries. All figures are approximate.

ALLIED PRODUCTION ARMAMENTS & WAR MATERIAL PRODUCED (WORLD WAR II)

SOURCE: THIS WAR BUSINESS, BY ARTHUR GUY ENOCK.

443,031 Aircraft

49,319,462 Guns, large & small, rifles & fire weapons

82,352,314,472 Ammunition, bombs & mines etc.

79,000,000 tons Naval & mercantile shipping

5,157,458 War vehicles & tanks

1,585,101,000 Clothing, textiles & footwear

KILLED UNDER NAZI RULE*

SOURCE: THE WAR AGAINST THE JEWS (1933-1945) BY LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ.

Country	Est. Pre-War Jewish population	Estimated Jewish population killed	Percent killed
Poland	3,300,000	3,000,000	91
Baltic countries	253,000	228,000	90
Germany & Austria	240,000	210,000	88
Bohemia & Moravia	90,000	80,000	89
Slovakia	90,000	75,000	83
Greece	70,000	54,000	77
Netherlands	140,000	105,000	75
Hungary	650,000	450,000	70
Belorussian SSR	375,000	245,000	65
Ukrainian SSR	1,500,000	900,000	60
Belgium	65,000	40,000	60
Yugoslavia	43,000	26,000	60
Romania	600,000	300,000	50
Norway	1,800	900	50
France	350,000	90,000	26
Bulgaria	64,000	14,000	22
Italy	40,000	8,000	20
Luxembourg	5,000	1,000	20
Russian SFSR	975,000	107,000	11
Denmark	8,000	120	2
Finland	2,000	Unknown	Unknown
Total	8,861,800	5,933,900	67

* There is no precise figure for the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust. The figure commonly used is the six million established by the Nuremberg Tribunal in 1946 and repeated later by Adolf Eichmann, a senior SS official. Most research confirms that the number of victims was between five and six million. The conclusion of these figures are reached from official studies comparing both pre-war and post war census records along with testimonies, witness statements and later research. The Jews were not the only victims of Nazism. It is estimated that as many as 15 million civilians were killed by this murderous and racist regime, including millions of Slavs and 'Asiatics', 200,000 Gypsies and members of various other groups. Thousands of people, including Germans of African descent, were forcibly sterilised.

COMBINED CASUALTIES AND FATALITIES IN AFGHANISTAN OF UK MILITARY AND CIVILIANS

SOURCE: THE HERRICK OPERATIONS CASUALTY AND FATALITY TABLES 7TH OCTOBER 2001 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2014. ALL FIGURES ARE CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

616	5,255
Total casualties (Excluding natural causes)	Disease or non-battle injury
306	453
Very seriously injured or wounded	Total fatalities
310	353
Seriously injured or wounded	Killed in action
7,443	49
Field hospital admissions	Other causes
2,118	51
Wounded in action	Died of wounds

NORTHERN IRELAND

SOURCE: THIS FIGURE IS SOURCED FROM THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICE SERVICE. CIVILIAN FIGURES WERE UNAVAILABLE.

Between 14th August 1969 and 31st July 2007, 655 UK Armed Forces personnel died due to operations in Northern Ireland.

BALKANS

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

72 UK Armed Forces personnel died due to operations in the Balkans from 1st July 1992 to present, of which 13 were specific to operations in Kosovo.

IRAQ

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

179 UK Armed Forces personnel died due to operations in Iraq from 1st January 2003 to present.

GULF WAR (16 JAN-28 FEB 1991)

The cost of the war in the Gulf is estimated to be \$60-70 billion.

WORLD WAR I (1914-1918)

An Estimated 10 million people lives were lost and twice that number were wounded.

WORLD WAR II (1939-45)

An estimated 55 million lives were lost, 20 million of them citizens of Russia.

DURING BOTH WWI & WWII

337,131 Allied troops (including 110,000 French) were evacuated from Dunkirk as German forces approached.

VIETNAM WAR (1954-75)

200,000 South Vietnamese, 1 million North Vietnamese Soldiers and 500,000 civilians were killed. 56,555 US Soldiers were killed between 1961-75.

FALKLANDS/MALVINAS WAR (1982)

Approximately 237 UK casualties compared to 1,500 Argentine casualties. The war cost £1.6 billion.

BATAAN, PHILIPPINES (1942)

Some 67,000 allied prisoners died on the Bataan Death March to camps in the interior by the Japanese.

KEY DATES AND EVENTS WWI

1914

June 28th Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria is assassinated. One month later Austria-Hungary declares War on Serbia. Germany invades Luxembourg, Belgium and France, opening the Western Front, which stretched across Belgium and North-eastern France. Germany declares war on Russia. Germans win the Battle of Tannenberg but lose 13,000 men. Turkey enters the war helping the German Naval bombardment of Russia. The first Zeppelins reached Britain.

1915

Italy enter the war on the side of the allies. Poison gas is used in the second battle of Ypres by German troops, claiming many British lives. British troops successfully land in Gallipoli but the mission was an eventual failure. Winston Churchill resigns.

1916

Winston Churchill serves in Belgium as Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. Germany fails to destroy British Navy at the Battle of Jutland and German ships remain in port for the duration of the war. 1 July battle of the Somme 60,000 British troops were either killed or seriously injured on the first day. General Nivelle was appointed Supreme War commander. US declare war on Germany.

1917

RAF is formed. Battle of Amiens. Allies recover France and Belgium from German troops. Armistice with Turkey is reached after allies successfully push back Turkish troops. Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated and the German empire collapses.

1918

11th November Armistice signed at 11am in the French town of Redonthe bringing the war to an end.

KEY DATES AND EVENTS WWII**1939**

September 1st Hitler invades Poland. September 3rd Britain and France declare war on Germany.

1940

Rationing starts in the UK. Churchill becomes Prime Minister of Britain. British Expeditionary Force evacuated from Dunkirk.

1941

Hitler begins Operation Barbarossa – the invasion of Russia. Germany continues to ‘Blitz’ key cities in Britain. Allied forces take Tobruk in North Africa. December 7th Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, bringing the United States of America into the War.

1942

Germany suffers setbacks at Stalingrad and El Alamein. Approximately 25,000 prisoners are taken when Singapore fell to the Japanese in February. US navy achieve victory at the Battle of Midway, in June, marking the turning point in the Pacific War.

1943

Surrender at Stalingrad marks the first major German defeat of the war. The Allied victory in North Africa enables the

allied invasion of Italy to be launched. Italy surrenders, but Germany takes over the battle in Italy. British and Indian forces fight Japanese in Burma.

1944

Allies land at Anzio and bomb the strategic monastery at Monte Cassino. In Eastern Europe the Russian offensive gathers pace. June 6th D-Day the allies invasion of France, Paris is liberated by August.

1945

Auschwitz liberated by Russian troops. April 12th Franklin D. Roosevelt dies and Truman becomes 33rd President of the US and Attlee replaces Churchill. Russian troops reach Berlin, Hitler commits suicide and Germany surrenders on 7th May. Japan surrenders on 14 August after atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

LIST OF WARS & CONFLICTS SINCE 1816

Since 1816 there have been a total of 654 wars, 4 of which are still going on around the globe.

1816

Allied Bombardment of Algiers of 1816

Ottoman-Wahhabi Revolt of 1816-1818

1817

Liberation of Chile of 1817-1818

First Bolivar Expedition of 1817-1819

War of Mexican Independence of 1817-1818

British-Kandyan War of 1817-1818

British-Maratha of 1817-1818

1818

First Maori Tribal War of 1818-1824

First Caucasus War of 1818-1822

1819

Shaka Zulu-Bantu War of 1819-1828

Burma-Assam War of 1819-1822

1820

Buenos Aires War of 1820

Sidon-Damascus War of 1820-1821

First Two Sicilies War of 1820-1821

Ottoman Conquest of Sudan of 1820-1821

1 8 2 1

Sardinian Revolt of 1821
 Greek Independence War of 1821-1828
 Second Bolívar Expedition of 1821-1822
 Turco-Persian War of 1821-1823
 Second Maori Tribal War of 1821-1823
 Siam-Kedah War of 1821
 Spanish Royalists War of 1821-1823

1 8 2 3

Franco-Spanish War of 1823
 First British-Burmese War of 1823-1826

1 8 2 4

First British-Ashanti War of 1824-1826
 Liberation of Peru of 1824-1825
 Egypt-Mehdi War of 1824

1 8 2 5

China-Kashgaria War of 1825-1828
 Dutch-Javanese War of 1825-1830
 Mexico-Yaqui Indian War of 1825-1827
 British-Bharatpur War of 1825-1826

1 8 2 6

Brazil-Argentine War of 1826-1828
 Central American Confederation War of 1826-1829
 Viang Chan-Siamese War of 1826-1827
 Janissari Revolt of 1826
 Russo-Persian War of 1826-1828

1 8 2 8

First Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829
 Peru-Gran Colombia War of 1828-1829
 Miguelite War of 1828-1834

1 8 2 9

Argentine War for Unity of 1829-1831
 Spanish Reconquest of Mexico of 1829
 Sayyid Said War of 1829-1830

1 8 3 0

First Murid War of 1830-1832
 First Albanian Revolt of 1830-1831
 French Occupation of Algiers of 1830

First French Insurrection of 1830
 Belgian Independence War of 1830
 China-Kokand War of 1830-1831

1 8 3 1

Egyptian Taka Expedition of 1831-1832
 First Polish War of 1831
 Siam-Cambodia-Vietnam War of 1831-1834
 First Syrian War of 1831-1832

1 8 3 2

First Mexican War of 1832
 Ottoman-Bilmez-Asiri War of 1832-1837

1 8 3 3

Argentine-Ranqueles Indian War of 1833-1834

1 8 3 4

Egypt-Palestinian Anti-Conscription Revolt of 1834
 First Carlist War of 1834-1840
 Second Murid War of 1834
 Cabanos Revolt of 1835-1837

1 8 3 5

Bolivia Conquest of Peru in 1835-1836
 Farroupilha War of 1835-1845
 Texan War of 1835-1836

1 8 3 6

First Bosnian War of 1836-1837
 Third Murid War of 1836-1852
 Boer-Matabele War of 1836-1837

1 8 3 7

Druze Rebellion of 1837-1838
 Sabinada Rebellion of 1837-1838
 Dissolution of the Bolivia-Peru Confederation of 1837-1839
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1 8 3 8

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 First British-Zulu War of 1838

1 8 3 9

First British-Afghan War of 1839-1842

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1 8 4 0
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1 8 4 1
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 Triangular Revolt of 1841
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1 8 4 2
 Karbala Revolt of 1842-1843

1 8 4 3
 British-Sind War of 1843
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1 8 4 4
 First Haiti-Santo Domingo War of 1844-1845
 Franco-Moroccan War of 1844

1 8 4 5
 First Maronite-Druze War of 1845
 First British-Sikh War of 1845-1846

1 8 4 6
 Cracow Revolt of 1846
 First British-Xhosa War of 1846-1847
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1 8 4 7
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 Second Carlist War of 1847-1849
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1 8 4 8
 Second Two Sicilies War of 1848-1849
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 First Schleswig-Holstein War of 1848-1849
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 Second French Insurrection of 1848
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1 8 4 9
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1 8 5 0
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1 8 5 1
 Ottoman-Yam Rebellion of 1851
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1 8 5 2
 Second British-Burmese War of 1852
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1 8 5 3
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1 8 5 4
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1 8 5 5
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1 8 5 6

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1 8 5 7

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1 8 5 8

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1 8 5 9

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1 8 6 0

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1 8 6 1

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1 8 6 2

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1 8 6 3

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1 8 6 4

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1 8 6 5

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1 8 6 6

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1 8 6 7

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1 8 6 8

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1 8 7 0
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1 8 7 1
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1 8 7 2
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1 8 7 3
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1 8 7 4
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1 8 7 5
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1 8 7 6
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1 8 8 2
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1 8 8 3
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1 8 8 4
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1 8 8 5
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 Second Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922
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 First British-Waziristan War of 1919-1920
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Franco-Syrian War of 1920

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 1 9 2 1
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 1 9 2 2
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 1 9 2 6
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 1 9 2 8
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 1 9 2 9
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1 9 3 0
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 1 9 3 1
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 1 9 3 4
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 1 9 3 8
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 1 9 3 9
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 1 9 4 0
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1950

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1952

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1953

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1954

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1955

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1956

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1957

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1960

Vietnam War Phase 1 of 1960-1965
 First DRC (Zaire) War of 1960-1963
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1961

Angolan-Portuguese War of 1961-1974
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1962

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 Anti-Khomeini Coalition War of 1979-1984
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 El Salvador War of 1979-1992
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 Third Chad (Deby Coup) War of 1989-1990
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 First PKK in Iraq of 1991-1992
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Sixth Iraqi Kurds War of 1996
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First Congo Brazzaville War of 1997

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PREPARATION OF TEXT

When I started to receive e-mails and letters from people, who offered their stories to be a part of this book, I thought they should be virtually unchanged for publication. It seemed errors in grammatical irregularities, the inconsistencies of spelling, the lack of punctuation - that these and other features if tidied up would deprive the stories of their personality and authenticity conveyed by the voices within them. Trying to maintain the balance of editing while not being over-intrusive, and turning the writing into something else is the backbone in the structure of this book.

All the facts, figures and images in this book are used with good intention. At the time of going to press all copyright and accuracy has been checked, when handling huge amounts of third party data errors can be made. Some pages required fewer changes; others have more. But what I hope remains is the integrity of the stories that have been so proudly given, so that we might all learn a little bit more.

Ni Bell

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Jim Betteridge and Stationhouse gave their talents, skill and advice when it was needed most.

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Angelo Marcos for giving his vocal talent and words.

Katie Eaton who gave her talents and knowledge when most needed.

I would also like to acknowledge, the tireless work of the

volunteers whose dedication make, the Poppy Appeal and what The Royal British Legion achieves on a daily basis, possible.

Those of you who have been generous enough to appear in this book through your stories. Equally, those of you that took the time to send me your e-mails, letters and documents, but I was unable to include them in this book. I am very humbled and privileged to have read them.

Mr Manderson your passion, equality and personal commitment to the development of education and belief in others will never be forgotten, sir.

Paul DePray and all the staff at Pearl Harbour, Hawai'i. When I visited Pearl Harbour not only did the staff there show enormous dedication to the preservation of the park but also in the preservation of the knowledge they hold. Their responsibility in passing on that knowledge through education is a vital example that we should all acknowledge and replicate.

All the staff at The Commonwealth and War Graves Commission whose constant and remarkable work continues long after we sleep. Their commitment to the responsibility they are custodians of is inspiring.

My family and friends I love you all. Especially my Mum for showing me the meaning of loyalty, love, resilience and grit through example and for being the best teacher I could have.

To my gentle and incredibly strong wife, May, I love you.

Most of all, to those who gave so much so we can now live our lives in freedom, and to those still fighting on our behalf today, and the countless civilians who are the innocent victims of war.

Thank you, N

APPENDIX

Below are the complete author's introductions for each previous edition of footsteps.

Authors Introduction (2010)

When, I left for France towards the end of April, with Richard, Ann & Sharon to visit the grave of my great uncle. I had only read about the events of the D-Day landings and the bombardment of the northern city of Caen, where my great uncle Frank was killed, on the front line, July 8th 1944 – he was twenty-five.

Even fifty odd years after the allied invasion of Normandy and the northern stretch of coastline in 1944, which unquestionably resulted in great loss. An unmistakable and unforgettable presence abides the air, along the coast and for many kilometres inland still today. When I walked on the sand and across the hilltops overlooking the horizon to the landing beaches, one can only take a deep breath as one tries to comprehend the events that took place fifty-three years ago. There is a great sense that compunction as taken place there if not then, certainly in the years that have followed. Every single person that leaves there seems to gain a more powerful understanding of the divergent ideals that cost so many lives; the very least you depart knowing that what took place can never be allowed to manifest its self again. This is a

very powerful place. People say there's no substitute for first-hand experience, thank God I wasn't there in 1944 and the months that followed. After you have been there is no need for first-hand experience...

February, 2010...

In 2008 I wrote a short story called in the footsteps of war, little did I know then it would indirectly lead to the creation of this project. That short story is included at the back of this book with a new ending especially for this publication. When I started to write and put this book together, in early 2009, I was transported back to when I had first visited France thirteen years ago. Photographs from that trip are also in this book. What you have read from 1997 is what I wrote word for word into the inside cover of the photo album from the trip. It left a lasting impression on me. Both sets of my grandparents both played their parts in the Second World War, just like so many other peoples grandparents did, and I was brought up with a deep and profound understanding of war and conflict.

Now in 2010 leading up to the 90th Anniversary year of the very foundation of The Royal British Legion and 90 years of remembrance, we must ask ourselves more than ever before what we have achieved and learnt. The new millennium is now well underway and together we must ask of ourselves the most personal and explicit of questions. We have to do this together, not only as a nation here in the United Kingdom but as members of a global community. Being part of a global community does not mean forgetting who we are as a nation, it means embracing who we are. We have the responsibility and duty to ensure the message of remembrance continues to get passed on. And with no less integrity and humility than those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in order to pass on to us their education.

It was a generation that knew something we didn't.

The stories that were passed down to me by the older generations of my family are significant for two reasons. First the details in my stories share a common thread that tie a nation of families together. Secondly, it was the art of conversation that took place to pass these stories and memories down to

me. We were not supposed to forget what happened, not all that long ago in our recent history but we are found guilty of doing so. The conflicts of the Falklands, Kosovo, Rwanda, Darfur and still today in Iraq and Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine have taken not only the lives of those that signed up to fight but the souls of innocent civilians. We have a duty to remember the innocent victims of war alongside those of the armed forces each year. We must never become arrogant enough to think otherwise. At the back of this book is a full list of wars and conflicts from 1816 to the present day. You can argue that the politics behind the modern day and recent conflicts are different from the world wars and indeed the ideals behind them. It is not by accident that the bulk of the stories in this book are from World War II. This highlights the urgency to make sure the stories we have are continued to be passed on. As the last remaining survivors and veterans of World War Two and the hand full of men that served from World War One leave us, we get closer to reaching and crossing the line where memory turns into history. What have we learnt in 90 years? And perhaps more unnerving and terrifying is what will our future generations have learnt from us in another 90 years? These are real questions which require real answers.

The most important thing that any of us can do is not to forget. However if remembering was all it took to resolve these questions there would be no need for this book. Remembrance is the start but education is the key. What happened then and what is happening now as a deep and profound influence and effect on all of our lives. It shapes and moulds who we are beyond individualism and creates our national conscious.

Inside this book you will find stories that have been passed down from one generation to the other. I won't elaborate about each story here I'll let you discover them for yourself. The only editorial changes in the stories are technical ones. On the whole they remain as when I first read them when they were sent to me. Each one is individual and unique and deserves to remain authentic and unaltered. The stories are told by people from all corners of the globe. They all have different political and religious values and points of view, heritage and race. Yet it's their differences that are the unifying trend. It connects all

of them in how they all telling the same message. Let us not forget. What can we learn and what have we learnt?

As the reader take note of the detailed and emotive accounts from the voices who knew something we didn't. All the time observing how you can continue spreading the word of remembrance through the art of conversation yourself.

I hope that this book might re-engage a few memories and result in conversation. If just one person learns something new about war and remembrance and learns about how truly global our community now is and always has been. The role we all play in each other's lives is connected like a spider to its web, incredibly fragile on the surface, but even stronger underneath, but one always needing the other. We can choose to take part in conversation and change together for a common good or we can stand by and let silence be our loudest and most powerful conversation. If we chose not to take hold of our responsibility, we will only leave our children and grandchildren wondering why we didn't do anything instead of only doing nothing. We at least owe them that. By speaking out and asking questions we can educate, inform and learn.

Ni Bell, London, February 2010

Author's update one year on... (2011)

5th November 2011...

It has been almost a year since my encounter with a tidal wave of economic repression – that in the end gave me two choices – to abandon the first edition and with it the voices contained within but not bound by those 140 pages, and do something that would make me a living - or through my company Brimar Entertainment self-publish the first edition of, In The Footsteps of War: Ninety Years of Remembrance.

As was the case almost a year ago and is still the case today, no publisher in their right mind wanted to produce a book that was non-profit in its entirety - and perhaps in a time of recession understandably so. Though many were and

still are interested – their bottom line ultimately formed their decision. Not because they found any lacking in the quality of the product.

But the story of how that first book and indeed today how this the revised edition - marking the ninety years since the foundation of The Royal British Legion – still found a way to print is a testament to what underlines the substance and creation of these books.

What I have found to my surprise that in spite of the current global economic problem, people wanted to help bring this new and revised edition to print. By giving their professional talents, time and support to this revised edition they are uniting with our communities around the world that believe in remembrance, education and supporting those communities that are affected by war and conflict.

A year ago, the world could not have foreseen the great changes made by the people in Africa and the Middle East. When united - their voices became louder than any order given by their oppressors ever did - Those men, women and children in Africa and The Middle East have reminded us all - that when communication and dialogue breaks down within society - ultimately so does humanity and peace with it. Underling that fact, were the riots in the UK earlier this year.

By not forgetting those sacrifices already made on our behalf and those that are still being made for us all - by making conscious decisions to educate ourselves and by better understanding others through listening - we can only hope to recognise that fact. But ultimately we must be committed to promoting peace through remembrance and education from within our communities. By speaking out and asking questions – we can educate, inform and learn.

Thank you for buying this book and by reading it choosing – not to forget.

This revised edition in part is dedicated to all those voices that have only recently re-found hope.

Ni Bell, London, November 2011

About this special ebook edition: Another year on...
(2012)

Again I find myself readying for the launch of another and updated version of footsteps. The journey to this point and to seeing this special edition ebook come into reality has been one of great privilege and thanks. Not to mention dedication, hard work and patience from all of those involved in this project. This new special edition ebook allows the new generation of people that read electronically, the millions of e-readers all over the world, to experience the real stories within footsteps the first time on most electronic enabled reading devices like the Kindle, iPad, Nook and smartphones.

I believe as an author there is room for both traditional paper books and electronic books. The important thing to remember is that a book, of any state, is only a vessel to carry the words from an author to you the reader. Writing of any kind is about communication and sharing stories. As we continue to pass on this time old tradition through the medium of reading the written word the future will remain bright.

In this new special edition ebook you will find the same stories as in the paperback editions with one new inclusion from The Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Defence, especially for this edition of footsteps. You will also find updated statistics and information in the facts and figures section of the book; each year this section of the book sadly only increases in data. As this is an ebook when you see links to the Internet you can click these and go straight to the source to find out more about the people and organisations in this book.

I want to thank you the readers. For your support of footsteps over the last two years and for visiting the book's website: www.inthefootstepsofwar.co.uk. On the website you will find more updated information and educational resources so please do use them. There is still a lot of work to be done in ensuring this education. Continue to pass on what this book has started. This year remember those who have given so much. Choose not to forget. And every year continue helping others to remember by sharing your own stories with

them. Remembrance is the start but education is the key.

With a grateful heart - I hand over to you the reader this special edition ebook - the final and last edition of footsteps.

By speaking out and asking questions we can educate, inform and learn.

Ni Bell, London, 1st November 2012



Aligning headstones. Courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Commission Meeting WMA. Courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Mazargues, France. Courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Cleaning the Menin Gate Memorial. Courtesy of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Between 1937 and 1946 the world population fell from 2.3 billion people to 2 billion people.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WAR: THE SHORT STORY

It fell to Earth like black flakes of snow, except it wasn't snow. Each individual flake floured and spun until it fell to its final resting place but could it really rest? Silence was broken in the woods only by the marching boots snapping through the undergrowth, the only natural thing left in this unnatural environment. As the boots continued to march the silence and stench violated the senses of everyone marching.

They were getting close to the camp. That's how they knew the stench was not coming from them anymore. A new smell of war had entered their sensory vocabulary, an unmistakable one that would be burned into their minds until they passed on. And who knew how long that would be, each and every one of them going on but by the grace of God. The black snow like flakes continued to fall, covering the ground like a well laid carpet fitted between every inch of tree and frozen root, the crunch of snow was stifled and softened by it. Dawn was still cushioned by night, a new day normally brings new hope, but not here and not in their war. Any light that would have been made by the pure white snow was eclipsed by the impure blanket of blackness on the woodland floor.

As they got closer and closer, not speaking not daring to breathe heavier than was needed, the command to stop was given by the raise of an arm. The next movement was drop to the ground and take aim at the iron gates to the camp. As their heavy bodies hit the ground the carpet of blackness was

strewn upwards and off of the woodland floor; clinging to their hair, their ears, and their lips. With every inhalation drew in a piece of scattered soul. An order was given and a lone solider approached the gates on his belly. The noise of machine gun's been cocked and readied could be heard clicking and clunking to provide covering fire. As the lone solider got closer the dirt of war was washed away by sweat from his teenage face. The men had not shaved for days; by his face you could not tell. He was only ten feet away. The snail trail he had made on his belly through the snow was grey. He was seven feet away. The rest of the men took a firm and sure aim at the gates and surrounding fences. He was three feet away. Lying perfectly still covered in continually falling black flakes, he moved in on his destination.

His cold hand reached the foot of the gate. He was in the centre of the two gates where they would part once opened. The smell was stronger and he held down most of his vomit with grit, the rest ran out from the corners of his mouth. His eyes scoured for a lock or chain or some kind of anything preventing the gates being opened, he found nothing. Could it be a trap? He held out one hand and as bare flesh pressed on ice cold steel, his skin burned as one of the gates creaked, but did not open. Snow fell from the gate as it shook and fell down the back of his neck, his head was down and unsure. There was a silence and a mood anticipating gunfire from the camp guards; there was none. The lone solider turned to his captain, looking for advice, the captain signalled to push the gates harder next time.

He raised his head and looked once more at the gates. He looked through them and beyond into the camp. He could make out what looked like people moving in indiscriminate patterns, and a huge chimney bellowing thick black smoke high into the winter sky. Dare he stand to push the gates this time? Once more still laid on the ground he turned and looked back at his captain and to the rest of the men, who amongst the woods were practically invisible. He was saying goodbye. He locked his gun and brushed off the frost from the barrel of his rifle. He squeezed the gun hard with fear as he gripped it. He slowly got to his knees, then raised one leg at a time until he stood. He held the gun with his right hand and raised it

diagonally across his chest and pushed his body into the left gate and forced it open. He looked up towards where he had seen what looked like people moving. They had stopped and they were still. He dropped his rifle and brought it up to his eye level and he took aim.

The scope on his gun was blurred and frosted with ice. He squeezed the trigger and the shot flew high into the air over the heads of the still herd of people. They didn't move. He nervously moved his head to the side, his chin pressed against the rifle. His left eye was blinkered by the barrel of the rifle and it guided his sight on to his target. He blinked rapidly, trying to gain some kind of focus. His cattle hadn't returned fire. He felt a hand on his shoulder squeeze his skinny frame. The rest of the men fell in from behind and gathered at the gates. They all stood there, in silence. The captain rubbed the lenses on his binoculars and took another look. The captain told his men to lower their weapons. Together the lone solider and the captain pushed hard against the heavy gates, and the company started to funnel slowly into the camp. Their eyes did not move from the skeletal-ghosts of the walking dead woefully coming their way. The stench was hard to take as it was but as they got closer the stronger it became. The soldiers led by the captain walked towards them.

The captain realised if he had walked into hell, it was a hell where a war was still being fought. Snapping out of whatever place his mind had been taken to he gave the order for the men to spread out and secure the camp. Some of the soldiers vomited and tried to be as discreet as possible. Others just sighed and lowered their heads removing their helmets, somewhere close to tears, a thousand emotions and more ran through the veins of these war harden men. Humbled and disgraced at whom they saw stood in front of them. They thought they had already seen death's final hand in a game none of them wanted to play. But they had been wrong. As the skeletal remains of the still conscious innocents stood and gazed with emotionless faces. Their mouths open, black and whole from missing teeth. Their bones and skin were no longer separate organic things; they were as one, deathly macabre and impossible to see where the flesh started and where the bones began. The smell of disease and diarrhoea

was not only in the air but was also apparent to see. It was the symbol of evil extermination at its peak. Everything about the camp had a rotting feel to it, a deep-rooted rotting evil feeling. Finally realising and compounded by truth, the soldiers scrambled to spit out the black snowflakes or ash; as they now understood it to be and pulled their clothing over their mouths. The smoke was still bellowing out from the chimney. The captain stared into the eyes of the prisoner closest to him, he pushed his teeth together moving his jaw, trying to control his own emotions he put out his hand to the prisoner. Now vis-à-vis with liberation the ghost of a man just stood there, the captain moved towards him, took hold of the prisoners' hand and placed it in his own and shook it. The prisoner collapsed into the captain's body. It was over.

The raw of vehicles came thundering up behind them and more soldiers alighted on to the blackened snow. These were the soldiers that should have arrived nine days ago; these were the soldiers that should have been sitting in their own waste for the last week. But the unfairness of war made everything and everyone equal eventually; except the innocent. A whistle was blown from inside one of the many huts within the compound. A group of soldiers ran towards the noise and drew their weapons. Once inside they could see twenty or thirty German soldiers sitting smoking cigarettes, their uniforms undone, and their sleeves rolled up. Desolate and not caring, they had carried out their last instructions to their final solution and knew the arms of Churchill and Eisenhower would soon be around them.

There were already five allied soldiers in the hut with the German soldiers, by the time the captain arrived with more men. The immediate thought was to butcher the evil bastards with rapid fire right there and then. He gave the order to search them and secure them in the hut. He then ordered he did not want to see anyone harm the new prisoners of war. One or two of the men took that to mean if he didn't see it, it didn't happen. And as soon as the captain was gone, the once lone soldier who had grown to become a man within moments of stepping foot inside the camp, pistol whipped the smug grins from the faces of half a dozen of those evil bastards.

The black snow like flakes stopped falling. The fire in the belly of the furnace at the bowels of the chimney had been extinguished, by the now stomach strong soldiers. It would be a few more weeks until the full extent of what had happened that morning started to sink in. It would be months and years before the world was even ready to understand. It would be a morning I'd always remember. A morning that started by crawling on my belly, covered in black flakes of scattered soul.

'That was you and your friends! What happened, next Grandad?'

'We were brothers not friends. We made an unsaid promise, all of us who were there, whatever it took to complete the job we would.

From that morning on we'd never forget.'

SPECTEMUR ~ AGENDO

As I sit beneath the sun,
Many thoughts pass through my mind,

I'll gaze around
And tell you what I see;

Soldiers and airmen in uniforms
To make this country free.

E M Ledger

The book is a collection of real stories written by real people whose lives and families have been touched by war. Authors include His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, The Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu, The British Prime Minister The Rt Hon David Cameron MP, Angelo Marcos and Terry Waite CBE alongside veterans from World War II, Afghanistan, Pakistan and families and individuals who have been affected by various wars and conflicts. Organisations that have written for the book include World War II Valor In The Pacific National Memorial Hawai'i, The Commonwealth and War Graves Commission, The Royal British Legion and Yad Vashem.

This year choose to remember. Support our service men and women. By speaking out and asking questions we can educate, inform and learn.

This is a non-profit book intended to be used as a study guide and aid to develop the understanding and promotion of education, forgiveness and peace. In addition, all profits from the sale of this book will be donated to The Royal British Legion.

“

By buying a copy of this book and bringing it to the attention of your friends you will be playing your part in the relief of suffering. ”

Terry Waite CBE

